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CHASED OVER THREE CONTINENTS

By A NEW YORK DETECTIVE.

"Hold on! I know you!" he said sternly. "Surrender, or——" "To the boats! To the boats! The steamer is sinking!" shouted an excited person who suddenly came dashing through the door.

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CHASED OVER THREE CONTINENTS;

OR,

Old King Brady Around the World.

By A NEW YORK DETECTIVE,

Author of "The James Boys in Boston; or, Old King Brady and the Car of Gold," etc., etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

TWO SCENES.

SOMETIMES Old King Brady, the world famous detective, has by mere accident tumbled into cases of great importance; probably most other detectives can say the same.

This was the way in which Old King Brady became connected with the celebrated case of the money changer, Pontus Pinto, which, of course, every one remembers. We mean that old fellow who was found dead in his basement office on Wall street in the month of May, 18—.

It was something after three P. M., and the Board had already closed when Old King Brady, who had been down in "the street" to look after a little private speculation, was startled by seeing a tall, spare, iron-gray individual come rushing up the steps of old Pontus Pinto's money changing cellar with a face as pale as death.

"Murder!" he shouted, waving his hands excitedly. "Murder!"

Yes, he said it twice, and he would certainly have repeated it a third time had not the detective caught him by the arm.

"Don't, my friend! Don't do it," he said, in a low, earnest whisper. "Calm yourself! Do you want the whole world flocking into your place if there has really been murder done?"

Fortunately but few heard the cry, and of those who did, all but one little rat of a newsboy seemed to take it as a joke.

The tall man appeared to hail the interference of the detective with joy.

"My brother!" he gasped. "My brother! They have killed him. It's Mr. Brady, is it not?"

"I am Mr. Brady, but I am not your brother."

"No, no! My name is John Pinto! For God sake, Mr. Brady, come in here. My brother has been murdered! He is dead—dead—dead!"

Following the excited speaker Old King Brady popped down the cellar stairs.

He had often heard of John Pinto, the retired capitalist, and knew his name to be good for millions. The detective scented an important case.

"Lock the door!" he said, hurriedly. "Lock it quick!"

They were none too soon. Probably the newsboy's belief in the reality of the tragedy had been catching, for the key was no more than turned when a dozen noses were flattened against the window and the iron steps were crowded with excited men.

"Has there really been murder done here?" questioned Old King Brady.

"See for yourself! Oh, my brother! My brother!"

John Pinto, the millionaire, weeping!

Here was a sight not to be witnessed every day!

He led the way through the stuffy little office with its safe, its piles of account books, its little heaps of gold pieces and bunches of foreign bills upon the counter and in the windows, into the rear room where the detective, to his horror, saw an elderly, florid man, lying stretched upon the floor.

Old King Brady instantly recognized him. It was Pontus Pinto, Wall street's best-known money-changer. His face was purple and swollen, his eyes were set, and his limbs rigid. It needed but a single glance to see that the man was dead.

"What is all this?" demanded the detective. "Why is it that there is no one here but ourselves? Where are all Mr. Pinto's clerks? Who committed this crime?"

"It's murder—murder!" was the hollow response. "Not satisfied with killing my brother, they have robbed the safe. George Lowis—that man Steers. They did it. I warned Pontus against that white-faced old scoundrel, but he would not hear me. Mr. Brady, there has been a good half million stolen. I'll pay ten thousand dollars to the man who brings the murderers of my brother to justice and gets that money back."

It was a big reward, and Old King Brady felt that he had fallen upon a case which was likely to pay, for the word of old John Pinto was considered quite as good as his bond by every one on the Street.

He knelt beside the body of the dead man, and for a few moments proceeded to examine it in silence.

"How long have you been here, Mr. Pinto?" he presently asked.

"I—I just came in."

"Who was here when you entered?"

"No one. The door was open and my brother lay there just as you see him now."

"What? Was the office left alone?"

"Yes. The scoundrels! They seized all they could lay their hands on and left."

"Who?"

"George Lewis and Steers."

"Who are these persons?"

"Lewis is a young man who acted as my brother's confidential clerk. Steers was the bookkeeper There can be no other explanation of it. Otherwise why should they run away? At no time in the day is this office left alone."

Old King Brady arose.

"Mr. Pinto," he said, "thieves they may be, but they are not murderers. It is my firm belief that there has been no murder committed here. Your brother, sir, died a natural death."

"Never, sir! Look at him!"

"I assure you, sir, it is the truth."

Now here was a difference of opinion. Which of these two men were right?

As this is a case in which no deep mystery is involved, let us proceed at once to make things plain, and drop back in time about one week to an entirely different scene.

A scene of festivity, in fact—a brilliantly-lighted ball-room, the parlors of Mrs. Pontus Pinto on Madison avenue, near Twenty-eighth street.

It is the event of a season with a certain set who, debarred from admission among the true bon-ton, like to consider themselves "society." Not that there is so much difference between the various social grades—we simply state things as they are.

A conservatory redolent with the soft fragrance of tropical plants, a pretty girl in white, a handsome youth of some nineteen years in black.

An old scene and an older story. It needs no interpreter. There is love-making going on.

"Don't, George! Don't! Some one may see us. Some one may hear."

"Edith," whispered the youth, "so far as I am concerned I don't care if all the world sees and hears. I love you, dearest. Oh, Edith, could you go away, to be gone years, for all we can tell, and deny me the poor privilege of saying good-bye?"

"Nonsense, George! I'm only off for a trip around the world with my uncle. We shall be back inside of a year. Of course you will see me off when the time comes to start."

"But, Edith——"

"Now I know what you want, George. You want me to promise to marry you before I go. I won't do it. I won't tie myself down to any one. It is not because you are only father's clerk; that makes no difference whatever. I'm not ready to be engaged yet. I love you—just a little. You dance splendidly, and—there, I told you so! Let go of me, sir. We are caught, just as I said."

It was so. A young man had suddenly entered the conservatory by another door, coming in sight of the lovers, just in time to see George Lewis,

the penniless orphan, Mr. Pinto's hired clerk, disengage his arm from the dainty waist of his employer's daughter. There was a malignant scowl upon his pimply face, and his glance was blacker than his faultless dress suit.

Edith saw, and with a shudder glided away among the shubbery and disappeared.

"Well, upon my soul you've got a nerve!" hissed the new-comer. "George Lewis, do you know who you are? Do you know who I am?"

"Well, I rather think I do," replied our young lover coolly. "You are Mr. J. Gustavus Jones, as you like to call yourself now that your father has grown rich by speculating in Wall street, with other people's money, Jim Jones, my cousin, as I know you, the fellow I've licked many a time when we were boys at school."

"Bah! Pig!" sneered the other. "Why do I trouble myself about you anyway? Old Pinto has promised me his daughter. Do you suppose that he'd give such a little highflyer as Edith to you, his fifteen dollar a week clerk?"

"Look out, Jim! If you dare to speak of Edith in that way again I'll show you."

"You'll show me what? If you say another word I'll have you thrown out. I want you to understand, Mr. Lewis, that I'll speak of Miss Edith Pinto in any way that pleases me. She's to marry me as soon as she returns from the trip around the world, upon which she starts tomorrow. It's all arranged. As for you, I shall speak to old Pinto and have you promptly bounced, you wretched half-starved tramp!"

"You can say what you like about me, Jim," replied George Lewis, looking very white. "In this house I shall not forget that I am a gentleman. When you speak slightingly of Edith, though, it's another thing. Don't you ever dare——"

"I'll say what I please about the little dame," sneered Jones, with a vulgar leer. "You're mighty high strung in your notions all of a sudden. To me all women are alike—worth just what you can get out of them. I'm going to get a cool million with Edith, and——"

Biff—bang—thud! Then exit George Lewis from the conservatory.

The first was a blow, the second a fall, and the third a kick which sent Mr. J. Gustavus Jones spinning across the floor like a blown up bladder.

George Lewis, with features very white and set, walked straight through the parlors to the dressing-room, put on his hat and coat and left the house.

"He shall never marry Edith if I can help it," he muttered, between his set teeth as he strode down the avenue. "I'll wait till she's gone and then I'll take means of letting Mr. Pinto know that he's a low-lived rake and a gambler. He'll find out that he can't fool with me."

It was a bold and proper resolve, but could he carry it out?

Mr. J. Gustavus Jones had money, while his cousin had nothing but his salary to depend upon.

If George had asked his employer for the hand of his daughter he would have been first stared at, then laughed at, and finally kicked out into the street.

"Pshaw! He may be able to get the best of me with his fists, but I'll show him a trick before many days are over his head," hissed Jones, as he left the Pinto mansion shortly after. "He marry Edith! Well, I like that. I rather think a few dollars will fix things about as I want them. Look to yourself, George Lewis, I'll square this business yet. I'll put you in the soup!"

Two dissimilar scenes, these—a dead man in a Wall street office and a thrashed dude in a Madison avenue ball-room.

That there was an intimate connection between them will be made startlingly plain before this story is fully told.

CHAPTER II.

MR. STEERS STEPS OUT.

"George Lewis, look at me! Look me right square in the eye, listen to what I have to say, and understand me when I say it. You are a thief! I dismiss you from my employ!"

"Good-day, sir; good-day! Beg pardon if I intrude. I am introducing among the bankers, brokers, money changers, shippers, exporters, importers, and every other kind of porters, Stubbs' Compendium of Business and Universal Encyclopedia of the Useful Arts, a book in which—eh? Did you speak? Ah, just so. Warm weather for this time of year, ain't it? One might almost say hot."

And the book-agent who had forced his way into the private office of Mr. Pontus Pinto, the Wall street money changer, began mopping his face with a parti-colored handkerchief—one of the two-for-ten-cents, sold-out-of-a-wagon kind—and smiled as blandly as though he had been offered a cigar instead of receiving a loud and imperative order to leave the premises at once.

He had come at an unfortunate time that book-agent—very. It was a wonder that Mr. Steers, the book-keeper, permitted him to pass.

It was the afternoon of a certain day about two weeks subsequent to the quarrel between the cousins in the conservatory.

To George Lewis they had been weeks of triumph, and now came this blow to dash him down.

When, upon calling him into the private office shortly after the closing of the Board that day, Mr. Pinto suddenly made this terrible accusation against him, George was taken entirely by surprise; so much so, in fact, that he almost hailed the impertinent intrusion of the book-agent as a relief.

"No! Don't want your infernal book. Get out!" roared Mr. Pinto, his full red face growing redder even than usual.

"Beg pardon," persisted the man, one of those shabby genteel individuals in greasy black broadcloth and rusty stove pipe, so often seen on lower Broadway. "Possibly if you saw the work, you might subscribe. Price only five dollars. Permit me to show you a sample copy. I——"

"Get out! Get out!" roared the money changer.

"Sir! You forget yourself! I am a gentleman. My name is Galloway Gunn. I descended from one of the most aristocratic families of Virginia. I——"

"By the eternal! you'll descend into the subcellar if you don't get out!" bellowed the broker, with his face almost purple now.

No doubt he would have kicked the noble descendant of the F. F. V's, had not that gentleman suddenly slid through an inner door, which, owing to the heat of the day, had been allowed to stand open, vanishing into the hall beyond.

"Now then, Lewis, for your case," Mr. Pinto began storming. "I'm a plain man and never waste words. I trusted you, boy. I believed in you. You have betrayed my trust by robbing me. You are a thief."

With livid face George Lewis stood before his angry employer trembling violently.

"Mr. Pinto—what terrible charge is this?" he stammered. "I am innocent, sir. I don't know what you mean——"

"George," interrupted the broker, evidently containing himself by a great effort, "I don't want to be hard on you, for I always liked you for your frank, open face, and a better worker I never had in my employ. When you told me those stories about your cousin, Jones, the other day, I believed you. I'm a plain man. I don't like his kind—I do like you; therefore I consented to your becoming engaged to my daughter before she left on her trip around the world, and now, my God! Look how I'm paid back! For two weeks I've been missing money from the safe, and now this afternoon when I send you off on an errand, and search your desk, I find this. Oh, George! George! how could you? I should have made you a partner yet."

Mr. Pinto was holding up an envelope, from which protruded several bills—fives and tens. Even in his excitement George Lewis saw that each bill was marked on the corner by a tiny cross in red ink.

"Mr. Pinto, this is an infamous lie!" exclaimed the young man. "Let me tell you that I never put that envelope in my drawer. You may think me a thief, but don't make me out a fool. This is a plot against me—a trick—I—— Great heavens! what is this?"

For Mr. Pontus Pinto, while listening to these excited words, suddenly toppled forward and measured his length on the floor.

"Help! help! He's dying! It's apoplexy! Mr. Steers—Mr. Steers!" called George, dropping to his employer's side.

"Well, what have you done now, George Lewis? Have you squared matters up by killing the old man? I saw you! It's no use for you to deny it to me!"

The speaker was a tall, lank, white-faced looking individual of some forty summers—and a few extra winters—who came creeping in from the main office in a fashion reminding one of an elderly tom-cat.

He paused upon the threshold, and taking a pen from behind his ear, shook it at George menacingly, while his parted lips displayed a perfect set of teeth of dazzling whiteness.

Taken altogether, Stedman Steers, for twenty years the book-keeper of Mr. Pinto's establishment, was not a pleasant thing to contemplate. The customers hated him; George despised him. Mr. Pinto tolerated him only because the man had in his possession secrets which the money-changer could not afford to have divulged to the world.

"Mr. Steers, for Heaven sake, be reasonable!" cried George. "Mr. Pinto has fallen in a fit; it's probably apoplexy. You know he was warned."

"Tut, tut, George Lewis, I know all," said the book-keeper, coldly. "You've been stealing. It's the excitement that has done this."

"It's false! This is a trick—a put-up job against me!" cried the young man, with much energy. "I believe in my soul, Mr. Steers——"

"Are you going to let that man die there?" interrupted the book-keeper, suddenly. "If you are innocent I hope you may prove it. Run for a doctor. You'll find one at the Stevens House. Get out the side door so that there need be no excitement. I'll throw some water over him and try and bring him to."

George was gone in a moment, for he saw that the book-keeper had advised him rightly.

No sooner was his back turned than Mr. Steers straightened up, and stood for a moment as rigid as a statue, making no attempt whatever to relieve his employer—in fact any attempt would probably have been useless, for to all appearance the man had ceased to breathe.

"At last!" he hissed, displaying his teeth to their fullest advantage at every breath. "At last my time has come. I've been expecting this. They shan't kick me out to starve after my twenty years of faithful service. I've been waiting for my chance, at last it has come."

He strode into the outer office looking around warily.

It was late in the day for their business. He found himself quite alone.

Hastily approaching his desk he wrote a note, inclosed, sealed it and placed it upon Mr. Pinto's desk in the private office.

Next he put on his hat, next glanced down at Mr. Pinto, who had never moved, next turned away, took a cane from the corner, and stooping down possessed himself of the envelope containing the marked bills, which he thrust into his pocket with a self-satisfied grunt. Then he walked to the vault, and taking up a large tin cash-box moved toward the open door.

"Good-bye, old man," he muttered, "if there ever was a mean old hunks in this world it was you. I'm square now. I know what's in this box. Half a million! Ha! it makes my head swim! I'm going West by the four o'clock train. If a man is going to steal he had better steal big—then he's not a thief, but a hypothecator. Ha, ha, good-day!"

Thus saying, Mr. Stedmann Steers passed out by the inner door only to come into sudden and violent contact with a man of just about his own build, dressed in a suit of shabby black and wearing a rusty high hat who was listening outside.

"Hold on! You're a thief! I can prove it! I have seen all!"

"Burn you!" hissed the book-keeper. "Say that again and by Heaven you die!"

This is what Mr. Pinto, in the private office, might have heard if he hadn't been past hearing anything.

Suddenly came the sound of a fall, followed by a violent struggle.

Two men seemed to be having it out on the floor of the basement hall.

At length it grew quieter—footsteps were heard retreating. Now followed perfect silence, broken suddenly by a cry in the office itself.

It is the cry of murder.

At last some one has come—some one is excited, and has lost their head.

It is Mr. Pinto's brother—he rushes wildly out into the street, shouting as he goes.

Again the office is vacant, save for the dead man.

It is not vacant, however, when, accompanied by Old King Brady, Mr. John Pinto returns, for a man has stolen in by the hall door.

He makes one dash for the vault, only to come within an ace of being caught by Mr. John Pinto and the detective returning.

There is no time to be lost. To retreat by the inner door is to run the risk of certain exposure—probably capture.

Alongside the vault is a lounge, and before the lounge a Japanese standing screen, used by the money changer to hide himself from the vulgar gaze when taking his afternoon snooze after coming in from the "exchange."

The intruder drops behind the screen and holds his breath.

He chuckled as Mr. John Pinto told how he had found the office left alone, but when the words "Half a million has been taken!" are dropped the man's face becomes a study.

From the position in which he was standing Old King Brady could have seen it but for the screen.

Who was the man behind the screen?

CHAPTER III.

THE MAN BEHIND THE SCREEN.

"Mr. Brady, are you sure of what you say? I thought my brother had been strangled, I——"

"So did I, but there are no finger marks about his throat. No, sir. It is apoplexy. If you want my opinion, he fell in a fit. Finding him dead his employees have helped themselves to all they could lay their hands on and lit out."

"I agree with you now—I have got to. Poor Pontus! That white-livered Steers is a man I always suspected. Mr. Brady, what shall I do?"

"Run down to the New Street station and tell them the situation. I will remain here."

"I'll do it. Hello! What now? What have you found?"

"A letter."

"But you took it off my brother's desk—you are opening it—you have no right."

"Tut, tut, man! It is addressed to me."

"To you!"

"See. It says 'to the police' on the envelope. Listen to the way it reads:

"To the police.—Mr. Pinto struck me, I struck back. I didn't mean to kill him, but I was mad because he had discharged my old friend, Mr. Steers, without a moment's notice, and was going to discharge me. It is no use to look for me. Rather than endure the disgrace of imprisonment and a trial, I shall drown myself. I shall take the Coney Island boat, and jump off when she is well out in the bay.

"George Lewis."

"Well, well! Then Steers is innocent!" cried Mr. Pinto.

"Bah, it is but a shallow trick!" answered Old King Brady. "No doubt a put up job between them. I stick to my first proposition still. Go for the police, Mr. Pinto, meanwhile I will take a look about here and see—— Hold on there! Stop!"

While speaking Old King Brady advanced toward the screen, and was about to look behind it, when a tall man in black suddenly darted out and made one dash for the inner door, almost overturning Mr. John Pinto as he went.

"Stedman Steers!" gasped Mr. Pinto, whose eye glasses were knocked off by the shock. "Brady, catch him! I'll stick to that offer of reward!"

Was it the book-keeper?

It was pretty dark in the back office, and Mr. John Pinto, besides being very short sighted, was laboring under intense excitement.

But Old King Brady never stopped to inquire whether he was right or wrong.

Ten thousand dollar rewards were not to be picked up on every bush.

The next moment and the detective was dashing through the dark hall after the flying figure of a man in black.

It was a tight chase.

No doubt that Old King Brady would have got him but for one thing.

When the man in black got to the end of the hall he slammed the door in the detective's face, which gave him a start not to be despised.

By the time Old King Brady got the door open and got out the man was half way up the block. When he reached Broadway a moment later he was just in season to see the fellow leap into a cab and go bowling up the street.

Calling another cab, the detective attempted to follow.

The delay, however, proved fatal, for the foremost cab was soon lost in the crowd.

It was with great chagrin that the detective gave it up at last and started to return to Mr. Pinto's office.

"I'll have to start afresh," he muttered. "I'm not through yet by any means, for—— Hello! What do you want?"

It was the driver who had approached him just as he was about to leave the cab.

"There he is now on the stand, sir," he said, respectfully. "Sure he must have doubled on us. It's Mike Feeney. If you ax him he'll tell you what he did with his fare."

But Old King Brady was almost out of hearing before the sentence was completed.

"Where did you drive that man in black?" he demanded, approaching Mr. Feeney who had just alighted from the box.

"To the Courtland street ferry, sir. He was in a hurry to catch a train," replied the man, innocently.

"Drive me there as fast as you possibly can."

As Mr. Feeney very wisely regarded all fish that came into his net he immediately obeyed.

"That fellow is going west with his plunder," thought the detective. "Very good. If there is a chance to make $10,000 I'll go west, too."

He consulted a time table. There was a Chicago express leaving at four o'clock by the Pennsylvania road. It then lacked three minutes to four.

"Faster! Faster!" called Old King Brady, thrusting his head out of the window.

Now the horse fairly flew over the ground, but for all the good it did he might as well have crawled.

Before they could gain the foot of Courtland street the bell at the ferry-house sounded, and the detective had the satisfaction of seeing the boat leave the slip.

"A tall, white-faced man in black—did such a person buy a ticket of you?" demanded Old King Brady, rushing up to the office.

"Yes, sir," replied the ticket seller, "there was such a man here—he bought two for Chicago."

"Two!"

"One for himself, the other for a younger man who was with him."

"You have got the wrong person. The man I refer to was alone."

"You are right. There was another man answering to your description here. He came before the others."

"Ah! I thought so. Did he buy a ticket?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where to?"

"Chicago, Mr. Brady."

"And went over in that boat?"

"Undoubtedly he did if he expected to catch the train. What's up? Is there anything wrong?"

"I have no time to explain further than to say that the man is a criminal. My friend, you appear to know me. Perhaps you can tell me some way by which I can catch that train."

"It is impossible, Mr. Brady. I have often seen you and——"

"Yes, yes. Think, is there no way? If it's a question of a little money now——"

"Money has nothing to do with it, sir. Just wait a moment. I will see the superintendent. If he would start the next boat two minutes ahead of time there would be just a chance. Sometimes they hold the trains a moment or so, particularly if they happen to have much baggage. I will be with you in a moment and let you know."

The moment seemed an age, for the boat was already entering the slip.

Presently the ticket agent appeared outside the office accompanied by a weather-beaten-looking gentleman, who announced himself as the ferry superintendent.

"Go right aboard, the boat shall start at once," he said, after hearing what Old King Brady had to say.

Never, probably, in the history of the Courtland street ferry did a boat make a quicker passage of the North river. It entered the slip before the other boat had left.

Old King Brady was among the first to leap ashore.

Hurrying through the waiting-room, he reached the entrance to the station just as the man was closing the door.

"I must go through here," he said, peremptorily.

"Can't do it. What train did you want?"

"The Chicago express."

"You're too late."

"Has it gone?"

"It hasn't left the station, no. But time's up, and I've shut the door."

"Will five dollars make you open it? I must catch that train. I am a detective. I'm after a man."

"No. My place is worth more than five dollars."

"Will ten do it?"

"No, no. You can't bribe me, boss."

"Then, by heavens, I must open it myself!" cried the detective.

He seized the man with an iron grip, and pressing him back against the wall, wrenched the key from his hand, and opening the door, slid through.

"Stop him! Stop him!" roared the door-tender, dashing after, but Old King Brady's fist was something no man cared to come in contact with after they understood what it was.

The first man to spring upon him went down like a log. The second followed him—there was no third.

Old King Brady knew on which track the Chicago express stood, and he could see that it had not yet gone out.

Rushing through the inner gate, he had time to go entirely through the train before it began to move, but he did not find his man.

By the time he alighted from the smoking car, the door-tender, with another man, was awaiting him.

"That's the feller! Arrest him!" cried the door-keeper.

"Not much!" laughed the man, whom Old King Brady instantly recognized as a well known Jersey City detective. "Brady, how are you? What's in the wind?"

"A tall man with a white face, black clothes, high hat, and ——"

"Yes, yes," interrupted the detective. "Had a young fellow with him. They took the St. Louis express at quarter to four."

The Chicago train was moving now.

Just as these words were pronounced the last car swept past them.

To Old King Brady's intense astonishment and chagrin there stood the man in black upon the rear platform waving his hand.

"Bye-bye, Brady!" he shouted, derisively. "You didn't get me, did you? I've got the start of you, old man. I'm going for that $10,000 reward!"

"Stop—stop the train!" shouted Old King Brady, springing after the retreating car.

What did the fellow mean?

Was this indeed Mr. Stedman Steers planning to gain a reward for arresting himself, or was it some one else who had hidden behind the screen?

CHAPTER IV.

WHAT HAPPENED ON THE LAST CAR.

To our readers it is a little doubtful, perhaps, whether the man in black seen by Old King Brady standing on the rear platform of the Chicago express was or was not the object of the detective's chase—the man behind the screen.

This is just as we intended it should be, for it was doubtful to Old King Brady.

There seemed to be some double-twisted business here somewhere which he could not fathom, some mystery, yet to be explained.

But the man behind the screen, much as he resembled Mr. Stedman Steers, could scarcely have been that gentleman, for it is very unlikely that a man who has just stolen $500,000, should linger about the scene of his crime.

In fact it was not Mr. Pinto's old bookkeeper. He had come off victorious in that brief combat in the passage.

In ring parlance Mr. Steers knocked the bookagent silly, for the man in black was no one else, and made the best of his way to the street.

"Confound the fellow! he nearly ruined all my plans," muttered Steers, as he gained the sidewalk on Wall street. "Now for the boy. While I'm about it I may as well make a clean sweep."

Without displaying any of the nervousness which might have been expected of one new to crime Mr. Steers turned down Broadway and entered a telegraph office.

He was absent a few minutes, but presently appeared on the street again and continued his leisurely walk down Broadway until he had gone about as far as the Adams Express office, where he ran right into George Lewis, who was hurrying up the street alone.

"The doctor is not in, Mr. Steers," panted the young man. "I——"

"Never mind the doctor," answered the bookkeeper, taking George by the arm and drawing him into Tin Pot Alley. "I want to speak to you."

"But Mr. Pinto?" protested the boy. "He may die in the meantime."

"No danger. He's dead as a smelt already."

"Great Scott!"

"It's so. You need not go back there. No doubt the police are in charge by this time."

"The police?"

"Why, yes. I fixed matters so that they would think it a case of murder."

"Wha—what?"

"Oh, you heard me plain enough, and beside that, my boy, I may as well tell you now as any other time—I've helped myself to a half a million, and you and I are going West together on the first train."

If a dynamite bomb had been thrown at George Lewis' feet he could scarcely have been more amazed. Now he began to understand what Mr. Pinto's terrible accusation meant.

"Mr. Steers, what can you mean?" he gasped, however, not knowing what else to say.

"I mean just what I say," was the rapid response. "I mean that I am tired of working for nothing for the meanest old hunks in Christendom—I mean that I am getting old and want more enjoyment in life. I've been for forty years looking out for other people's interests, and have never had more than a bare living for myself. Now I'm going to look out for my own, and try and find a little fun in what remains of life.

"But you must be mad!"

"Not at all. I'm as cool as a hog on ice. I am in dead earnest, too. Come, we will start for the train."

"But do you think for an instant that I'm going to stand in with you in any such wicked scheme as this!" said George. "I tell you——"

"Hold on!"

The book-keeper seized him by the arm and held him with vise-like grip.

"Hold on, George Lewis! You are going to do just that. You are going to Chicago with me tonight. From there we shall skip to San Francisco by the way of the Canadian Pacific. I have the disguises already, the sleeping berth engaged and the tickets bought, in short everything is prepared. You will not say no."

"Oh, I won't! But I will—— Let go of me, Mr. Steers."

"With pleasure, but if you attempt to run I'll kill you. You see this revolver? Well, I mean business. Now listen; I have left a letter in the office purporting to be written by you. It makes you out the thief. Go back and you will be clapped in the Tombs in half an hour's time, for Mr. Pinto has already told the police what he believed you to be."

"Steers, you're a villain!" cried George in dismay.

"Perhaps so; are you going back?"

"Of course, I am. I——"

"Hold on, look in your hat."

George pulled off his hat.

To his utter amazement there was a thousand dollar bill sticking in the lining. As he gazed stupidly upon it Mr. Steers snatched it from his hand.

"You see!" he cried. "I'm all ready for you. There's more money about you. I put it in your coat while it hung in the closet. It will be found when they come to search you. More than that, I have sent a written confession to the associated press signed by your name, stating that you murdered Mr. Pinto and stole the money. I have also telegraphed $100,000 in your name to a banking house in Hong Kong, China. If you go with me, George Lewis, I promise you that we shall live like nabobs; if you go back it will be all day with you. Now, you see just where you stand."

"And the rest of the money?" gasped George, fairly dumfounded.

"The rest I have about me. If you behave half is yours; if you kick I'll shoot you first and myself afterward if I can't escape. Which shall it be—now choose."

Must we own it? We must, because it is the truth.

The Chicago express on the Pennsylvania Railroad that afternoon carried as passengers George Lewis and Stedman Steers.

Sudden calamities often make men temporarily mad, warp their judgment, destroy their common sense and turn their brain generally upside down.

It was so with George Lewis.

He could see only disgrace and ruin before him if he attempted to resist the entreaties of the bookkeeper, and on the spur of the moment he resolved upon a very foolish plan.

"I will pretend to give in to him," he thought. "I will make the start, and the first chance I get when he is asleep, will grab the stolen money, come back and tell the whole thing to the police. With the money in my hands they will believe me, but if I go to them now, I don't stand a ghost of a chance."

Thus it happened that clumsily disguised, George and Mr. Steers occupied seats in the last Pullman on the Chicago train when it rolled out of the depot that afternoon.

The purchase of tickets for St. Louis had been only a blind.

Not until they were half way to Philadelphia did the boy begin to comprehend the folly of his hasty decision.

"Did you notice that tall elderly man, who came through the train just before we started?" asked Steers, who had been silent for a long time.

"Yes," replied George, who was pondering upon some scheme by which he could get the stolen money into his possession.

"Do you know who he was?"

"No."

"He was the notorious Old King Brady."

"What! The detective?"

"Yes."

"You don't mean it."

"I do though. If he had caught on to us it would have been all up."

"Of course he would have found the money on you?"

"Perhaps not."

"Why, where do you keep it?"

"Find out. I spose you are thinking of yourself too, and the money I told you I put in the lining of your coat. I have seen you looking for it, but you don't seem to find it. Ha! Ha! Ha!

"No. I didn't find. I suppose you know why."

"Because it ain't there. That was all a fake."

"Mr. Steers, if any one had told me you could act like this I'd have laughed at them. You are an out and out thief."

"Hush! So would I—a week ago; but—my God!"

The exclamation was sudden and despairing.

From somewhere behind them a man had suddenly come up, who now paused directly in front of their seat.

"How are you, Steers!" he said coolly, but in a low voice, fixing his eyes upon the defaulter in a meaning way.

"You!" gasped Steers after his first terrified exclamation. "What do you want?"

"To speak to you."

"Well?"

"I can't talk here. Come with me."

"Where?"

"We can step out upon the rear platform—the door is not locked."

In a mechanical way Mr. Steers arose and followed the man through the car.

George, during this brief conversation, had been too much amazed to speak.

The more so because he recognized in the stranger who had so suddenly intruded upon them—a tall, smooth-faced man in black—none other than the book agent who had forced himself into Mr. Pinto's office at the moment when that gentleman had made the startling and unjust accusation against himself.

But it seemed incredible that the book agent should be here.

Where did the man spring from? What was his motive for acting in this mysterious manner, unless he was familar with the full details of Mr. Steers' crimes?

Filled with anxiety, George arose and hurried through the car to the rear of the train, which for some unexplained reason had very considerably slackened its speed.

It was a bright, moonlight night, and there were also the lanterns which are attached to the end of every train—there was no difficulty therefore in seeing that Mr. Steers and the book-agent were there.

They seemed to be talking with great earnestness. The book-agent had his hand raised and was gesticulating violently, as George pressed his face against the glass.

"I must know what they are saying," thought the boy. "Their backs are turned. I guess I'm safe to open the door a second."

He did this, and had just thrust his head out, when he saw Mr. Steers suddenly give his companion a violent push which sent him flying off the train.

"Great God! what have you done?" gasped George as Steers turned upon him before he had time to shut the door.

"Done! I've settled him!" hissed the bookkeeper. "He'll never trouble me again and neither will you. Get back! Breathe a syllable or come spying on me again and you shall share the same fate!"

George drew back into the car, filled with horror.

And the train went rumbling on.

CHAPTER V.

IN CHICAGO.

It was raining in the big, smoky city by the lake side, and that, as every one who knows anything about Chicago is well aware, means a great deal.

It came down in torrents, spreading the soot on people's faces in irregular streaks and softening up the pasty mud on the wooden pavements into a slimy, slippery ooze, which did its work with the unwary pedestrians by throwing him or her—often it was both—down without ceremony, to the utter ruin of the clothes.

Now a rainy day is bad enough in Chicago but a rainy night is worse. It was night now—midnight, almost—when two men hastily emerged from Nagle's dance dive on State street, and started off down the street in the pelting storm.

We shall make no mystery of their identity. They were George Lewis and Stedman Steers: the latter in a condition sometimes described as very much the worse for wear.

"Will you go to the hotel now?" asked George, holding right to the bookkeeper's arm to keep him from falling. "You're too drunk to travel any more to-night, Mr Steers."

"No; won't do it. I'm out for fun, I am. Infernal peddler. What's he want? Say, Georgie, les give him the slip.

"There's only one way to do that."

"What you mean?"

"Take a cab and go to the hotel."

"Won't do it. I tell you what. Les' cut through this alley to the next street. If he's following us we'll soon know it. Then I'll do anything you say."

"Of course he's following us, Mr. Steers. It's my belief that he's a detective. Perhaps some one who saw you push——"

"Hush-sh-sh!" breathed Steers, suddenly sobering and pressing his hand over George's mouth. "Don't you dare breathe it. I won't have it. Remember my word is as good as yours. Remember that you are a thief in the eyes of the world, that Mr. Pinto had detectives on your track before ever this happened. Think what a figure you'd cut before the police when I swore that you and not I pushed that man off the train!"

"I believe you're scoundrel enough to do it."

"Ain't I? Now you just be sure I am. Do you see that fellow now, George? Say!"

"He's coming up the street"

"Then here goes for the alley. Brace up! Keep your weather eye peeled. To-morrow morning we start for Frisco. Chicago is no place for me."

They turned off State street into one of the numerous by-ways which connect that great thoroughfare with Wabash-avenue, and disapeared.

Scarce had they done so when a tall, slim man came flying up the street, heedless of the rain.

As he reached the alley he paused and peered in.

"There they go," he muttered, as he caught sight of the ill-assorted pair half way down the alley. "The fools! Now is my time if ever. The night is dark, and in there who'll be the wiser? I've gone too far into this thing to back out now."

He flung down a little black bag, such as street fakirs use to carry about their wares, and giving one quick dart into the alley disappeared.

A bad outlook for George Lewis this.

That first night settled George's determination not to return to New York unless he could do so with the stolen funds in his hands.

Even before the train reached Philadelphia the newsboy came through crying his papers. There was a murder and a big defalcation in New York, he said.

George bought a paper, and found that he was down for both.

The paper called him a thief and a murderer, giving in great detail the motive for his alleged crime, even going so far as to publish a picture, which might have been taken from any portrait in the Rogue's Gallery, so far as resemblance went. The account stated that it was generally believed he had fled to Canada, and further, that detectives were on his track.

There was no mention whatever made of Mr. Steers in this account, although in the Chicago papers of later date George saw it stated that the book-keeper was "his accomplice."

Certainly Steers had played his part to perfection thus far.

"It's united we stand, divided we fall, Georgie" the old bookkeeper kept saying; and he also kept such a good guard on the money that George, in spite of all his efforts, had never once "caught on" to its hiding place.

They had been in Chicago all day now, and it had been one constant round of drinking. George was only waiting to get the man to bed to accomplish the purpose nearest his heart.

Meanwhile who was the peddler?

Into every dive they visited after sundown this person seemed to follow them.

He was a tall, slim, heavily bearded man with a black patch over the left eye. He purported to be selling court plaster out of a black bag but he never tried to sell any to them.

The doors of Nagle's Great Western Music Hall had scarcely closed behind the defaulter and his companion, than a tall elderly man entered with a quick step and businesslike air, and took a hasty survey of the crowd of men who were watching with rapt attention a stout female in yellow skirts, very much abbreviated, who was engaged in the unfeminine occupation of swinging Indian clubs.

Evidently he was looking for someone, and it soon became equally evident that the person or persons were not present, for he turned away and walking straight up to the "bouncer," whispered a few words in his ear in a confidential manner, at the same time displaying a detective's shield.

"Yes," said the bouncer, "two such persons as you describe were in here. They left just a few minutes ago."

"An elderly man and a young fellow of about twenty?"

"Yes, and clumsily disguised, just as you say."

"Dressed in rough clothes, old man, smooth face, young man with reddish beard, evidently false?"

"Them's the ones. But say, mister, you're late. There was 'another fellow eying them. He went out before they did, but I'll bet a dollar he's a detective on the same lay as you."

"Can you discribe him?"

"Tall man, with a big beard on, black clothes, with a patch over one eye."

The inquirer turned away with an exclamation of disgust, and hastily left the place.

"I'm on their track I'm certainly on their track," he muttered. "The points I have gathered all tally to a hair; but who is this tall man in black? He can be but one person—the man behind the screen disguised. What if it should prove that he actually was a detective and had the start of me? That would be disgusting to the last degree."

He hurried down State street, heedless of the rain, looking this way and that.

Meanwhile Steers, still supported by George, had gone stumbling through the alley.

They had traversed scarcely half its distance when Steers tumbled over some unseen obstruction and measured his length in the mud.

"Get up! Get up!" cried George, now thoroughly worn out and utterly disgusted. "What's the matter with you? Can't you keep your feet?"

The words were scarcely spoken when a quick rush was heard behind them and George found himself falling.

A man had suddenly leaped upon him, dealing him a fearful blow which sent him senseless into the mud.

"Murder! murder!" roared the bookkeeper, staggering to his feet.

It was the peddler of court plaster—the man who had been dogging their steps.

In an instant he had the wretched defaulter by the throat and a glittering knife descended piercing his heart.

George saw—but he could not speak.

His senses were just returning; he was dazed, confused beyond measure.

"That squares us," he heard the man hiss, and then a mist seemed to come before his eyes.

When it cleared the man was in the act of rising up from the body of the wretched Steers.

By the light of a flaring gas lamp which projected from a building just before them, George saw that he clutched a fat package of greenbacks in his hand.

"It's the peddler! He's got the money!" gasped George, struggling to his feet, but before he could gain them the man had sprang away toward Wabash Avenue and was running like a deer.

Quick footsteps were now heard coming along the alley from the other end, and a loud voice called upon the boy to halt.

For George Lewis had started after the murderer with but one thought in his mind.

He would get that money now or perish in the attempt.

CHAPTER VI.

OLD KING BRADY BALKED.

MURDER! Murder! Help! Help!"

Feebly the cry rang out through the alley for the second time, just as the man who had made the inquiries in Nagle's Music Hall came bounding up.

He had heard the first cry and had darted into the alley just too late to catch sight of either of the flying forms.

"Hello! What's the matter here?" he exclaimed, bending over the book-keeper, who lay writhing in the mud.

"Murder, murder!" groaned Steers.

He gave one look at the stranger, and involuntarily, it seemed, put his hand before his eyes.

"You are Old King Brady! Oh, oh, oh! If you had only come before!"

"Stedman Steers! I know you now!" exclaimed the detective, flashing a dark lantern upon him.

"Yes, I—am—Stedman—Steers."

The words were spoken slowly. The breath of the old book-keeper seemed to come in short, quick gasps.

"Quick, man! Speak! Let me tell you that you have but a moment to live!" exclaimed the detective, hastily, as the bleeding wound showed him the situation. "Who did this deed?"

The answer was lost in an inarticulate gurgle. There could be no doubt that the man was sinking fast.

"The money! The money!" persisted Old King Brady "Has it been stolen by your murderer? Is that boy——"

"No, no! The boy is innocent! Innocent!" Steers burst out, with a desperate effort. "Run—leave me—he has the money—the man who—ah, God! Oh, God! And this is pleasure! I—a-h-h-h!"

It was the last effort.

The eyes closed, the jaw dropped, the labored breath ceased to come.

Had Stedman Steers, after a life of honesty, turned thief in his old age only for this?

Surely for nothing else.

Stedman Steers was dead.

Without hesitating an instant longer than to run his hands over the person of the dead man and assure himself that the pockets were empty, Old King Brady started out of the alley on the run.

"Balked again!" he muttered. "Balked at the very moment which might have been success."

It was provoking—tremendously so.

Night and day the detective had been travelling on this trail.

When he started it was the man in black whom he had been following, but he also had Steers and George Lewis in mind, and from information picked up on the road he soon became satisfied that they were on the train ahead of him.

Then, to his disgust, he remembered that he had seen two persons perfectly answering the description of the old book-keeper and his companion when he passed through the last car, but his mind being bent in another direction, he had given it no thought at the time.

Once in Chicago little by little the threads were collected. The hotel to which they had gone was discovered. The fact that Steers had purchased a ticket for China via the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad was also learned.

By patient persevering effort the detective had drawn closer and closer to his game, until now, all of a sudden, he had stumbled upon it just in time to be too late.

"But who was he chasing?"

There lay the mystery. One word more from Steers would have settled it, but death had stepped in and interfered.

A flying figure seen in the distance as he turned down Wabash avenue attracted the detective's attention, and almost before he had taken a step came a discovery which confirmed his belief that the runner was George Lewis, Mr. Pinto's accused clerk, and no one else.

It was a false beard lying upon the sidewalk right under a lamp-post—the very thing the young man seen at Nagle's was described as having worn—which gave the clew.

No expert at Hare and Hounds ever ran faster than Old King Brady ran then.

Monroe, Madison, Washington and Randolph streets were crossed, and the detective, in spite of two attempts made by policemen to stop him, still flew on. Not even when he saw the flying figure shoot up Lake street did he slacken his pace.

As he wheeled round into Lake street himself, he perceived that he was gaining, and he saw also that instead of one runner ahead of him there were two—one at quite a distance in advance of the other, and at the same time he became conscious that as many as a dozen men were chasing him behind.

Still he kept bravely on, never losing an instant. Soon he was dashing along Clark street toward the bridge with the hindmost of the two runners only a few rods ahead.

"Halt, there!" cried the detective, springing on with renewed energy. His foot caught an inequality in the pavement and down he went sprawling, amid a fearful tooting of steam whistles. There seemed to be something unusual going on at the Clark street bridge.

"Hold on! Hold on! Not so fast!" called some one.

Then in a twinkling two policemen were upon him, springing from the dear knows where.

"Stop—I'm a detective—I shall miss my man!" blurted Old King Brady as he half tore himself away and managed to regain his feet.

"That's too thin!" exclaimed one of the policemen. "Hold him tight, Joe."

"I've got him, cap," answered the other officer, tightening his grip on Old King Brady's arm.

It took full a minute to make these men understand the truth.

Meantime the hindmost runner had gained the bridge and went flying across.

"Are you really Old King Brady?" questioned Joe, as all three now ran on.

"Yes, yes! What's the matter here?"

"Coal barge stuck under the bridge. They've been trying to pull her out for half an hour, for they want to open the draw and let those steamers through," answered the officer as they ran.

"Are they going to open the bridge?"

"They shan't till we get over. Sorry I stopped you, but we are bound to run that fellow down on the other side."

"I wish I was as sure as you seem to be. You've done me a bad turn, neighbor, I——"

"Boom! Boom!"

They were within ten feet of the bridge now when a loud explosion suddenly broke upon them, followed by piercing cries and a dense rush of steam.

"Great heavens! What has happened?" burst from the detective.

It was easy to see. A tug had exploded her boiler. Now the air was full of flying bits of wood and iron, and the racket and roar grew deafening.

As the smoke cleared in a measure, the detective, to his intense disgust, saw that fully ten feet of the bridge had been blown away, while the shattered tug burst into flames which almost immediately seemed to communicate themselves to what remained of the bridge.

It was a desperate state of affairs, and again Old King Brady found himself mysteriously prevented from fulfilling his purpose.

It was enough to utterly discourage a weaker man.

Not so the old detective, however.

"I've just one chance in ten thousand!" he muttered, as he turned away from the scene of destruction unheeded by the policemen who had blocked his game.

"Those tickets for China. Northwest train starts at 12.30 A. M. $100 to ten cents George Lewis tries to go in it. It must be my work to prevent him even if every bridge across the Chicago river burns."

He turned aside and hurried to Wells street bridge, the one above.

No trouble here.

He was now across, and the big brick depot of the Northwestern Railroad was now in sight.

As Old King Brady's eyes rested upon the clock in the tower he saw that the time was just 12.29.

Never, even in his boyhood days, had he ran as he ran now.

"The Pacific express," he panted, as he dashed into the depot.

"Just gone, sir," replied the gate-tender coolly. He had seen thousands of people miss thousands of expresses, so what did he care?

Old King Brady leaned heavily against the closed gate quite faint.

"My friend," he said, "Tell me, was there a young man with a smooth face, who came running in here with a ticket to China, on board that train?"

"Yes! Ticket as long as your arm. Oh, yes."

"Did you see anything of a tall man in black, with a big beard and a patch over his eye?"

"Yes! What's up?"

"I'm a detective. These men—"

"I thought so. Hold on. I'll tell you something, boss. The tall fellow came first and bought a ticket for San Francisco. Then came the other, the young chap asking if he was aboard."

"Yes! Yes!"

"I'm going to give you a pointer, boss."

"Go on."

"The train started just as the young chap got aboard, and then, while I was just wondering about it, I seen the man with the black patch over his eye jump off and run back. He made a dive past me, through the gate, and shot out the side door and into a cab."

"You don't mean it?"

"I do. More than that, I know where he ordered the cabman to drive."

"Where?"

"To the Alton."

"What time does the Western express go out on the Alton?"

"St. Louis or Kansas City?"

"Kansas City."

"One forty."

Without another word Old King Brady dashed away and made for the last solitary cab which stood outside, which was just leaving the stand.

"To the Alton!" cried the detective. "Twenty dollars if I catch the Kansas City express!"

In a moment's time the cab was rattling over the Wells street bridge at break-neck speed.

Meanwhile, Old King Brady, on the inside, was trying to collect his thoughts.

"Steers told the truth," he muttered. "The boy is innocent. It is the man in black who stabbed him and stole the money. Scoundrel! But I'll run him down if I have to run him off the earth."

The moments flew, and so did the cab.

At last the Alton was reached.

Old King Brady dashed down the steps to the sunken track, filled with hope, for there was the other cab, with its smoking horse, just turning away from the station as he drove up.

"The Kansas City Express!" he exclaimed, almost tumbling over a uniformed official.

"There she goes, boss!" was the calm reply.

The last car of a long train was just vanishing from the station, and on the rear platform stood a solitary figure, looking back.

It was the figure of a tall man with a heavy beard, dressed in black cloth, with a patch over his eye.

He seemed to see the detective as he stood in the full glare of the electric light, for he waved his hat triumphantly as the train swung round the curve and disappeared from view.

CHAPTER VII.

IN SAN FRANCISCO.

"May I look at your register a moment?" asked a sad-eyed, shabbily dressed young man one morning in the early part of June, 18—, addressing himself to the clerk of the Lick House, on Montgomery street, San Francisco—the most noted hotel in the city at the time of which we write.

"Certainly," answered the clerk. "There it is—help yourself."

"But it ain't here," said the young man, who had already made this discovery.

"Ain't there! Are you blind? Stay though—you are right."

The clerk stepped into the private office where the landlord of the Lick and a tall, elderly gentleman were conversing in low tones, the register lying before them on the desk.

"Are you through with this book, Mr. Brady?" asked the clerk.

Mr. Brady was through with it, and he said so.

The clerk then took the book outside and flung it down upon the counter in front of the young man, who turned over leaf after leaf, until his eye struck the following:

"Mr. and Mrs. J. Pinto, New York; Miss Edith Pinto, do."

After the names were the room numbers 103 and 105.

"They are here," muttered the young man. "Now the point is to find her alone. See her I must, and as the Tycoon sails at daybreak to-morrow, I've no time to waste."

He consulted the register again, and ascertained that the Pintos had been at the Lick about a week. Then following down the name column, his finger rested presently on an arrival of the day before.

The name was J. Gustavus Jones, and the place again New York.

Mr. Jones it appeared had been assigned to room 101, nearly opposite to those of the Pinto tribe.

The young man's face grew dark and determined.

"Thank you," he said, pushing back the register.

All through the morning and on into the afternoon this same young man seemed to haunt a certain cigar store opposite the "Ladies' Entrance" of the Lick House.

Somewhere about three o'clock, just after a stout pompous gentleman and an equally lady had left the hotel in a carriage, he suddenly made a dart across the street and shooting into the hotel, hastened up-stairs, knocking gently at the door of No. 105.

Presently the door was opened by a young girl in deep mourning.

"Who did you wish to see, sir?" she asked.

The young man fell back, hesitated and turned pale. A strong light struck upon his face now, and any one who had observed him particularly must have seen that the reddish beard which covered his face was false.

"Edith—don't you know me?" he breathed.

Edith Pinto turned deathly white.

"George! Oh, George!" she burst out excitedly.

She seized his hand and drew him into the room, closing the door behind him.

In an instant the pair were locked in each others arms.

"You true-hearted, noble girl!" breathed George Lewis—for he it was—hugging Edith closer and pressing his lips to hers, again and again. "You do not believe me a thief and a murderer! Thank God for it! Now, I don't care a rap what the world may think, so far as I'm concerned; but for your sake——."

"But for my sake you are going to be brave and to do just what is right, George," replied Edith. "I received your letter, mailed in Chicago, dear, and I believe every word you say. You are innocent of my poor father's death—that is proved, for the doctors have long ago pronounced it a case of apoplexy. As for the stolen money, though it will take every dollar my father left behind him to make good the loss, I will never believe that you are a thief."

"Bless you, Edith! Bless you for those words! I swear to you——"

"Don't do it! George! Don't. There is no need. Tell me all about it, but swear to nothing—your simple word is enough for me."

For a full half hour they conversed together in low, earnest tones. Frequently Edith was moved to tears.

"And this man in black—you have not the faintest idea who he may be?"

"Not the least, dear. He escaped me somehow. I saw him board the train at Chicago that night, but when I came to look for him, he was not to be found. Knowing that you were to make a short stay in San Francisco, I came on, resolved to see you and let you know the truth."

"Who can he be?" mused Edith. "You say he was not the man Steers threw off the train?"

"I am certain he was not. He was a younger man, disguised. There can be no mistake about this."

"Probably he returned to New York with the money, George?"

"I fear so. At any rate there is no use hoping to do anything about it now. I think I shall go back too, and report to the police——"

"Don't do it, dear—don't do it. It would only get you into trouble."

"But what shall I do, Edith?"

"Go to Hong Kong with us, and draw the money that Mr. Steers telegraphed to that bank."

"But——"

"Oh, you need not fear discovery—your disguise is perfect."

"Edith?"

"What is it, George?"

"My cousin—I see——"

"George, I declare to you that I only regard Mr. Jones as a friend. He has persisted in following our party here. I would have returned when I heard the dreadful news, but uncle thought I had better not. You see——"

The words were yet on Edith's lips when the door suddenly opened and in walked the subject of their thoughts.

It was Mr. J. Gustavus Jones, as dudish and natty as ever.

He shot one hasty glance at George and his face grew dark.

"Aw! Beg pardon, Edith," he drawled, "if I am intruding."

"Oh, not at all!" exclaimed the girl, with all the coolness of an accomplished actress. "I was only talking with this young man about a new trunk. You may send it right up, sir, but be sure you are prompt. We leave on the Tycoon which sails for Hong Kong to-morrow, and are obliged to go on board to-night."

"You shall have it in an hour's time, miss," replied George, disguising his voice as much as possible.

He never even looked at his cousin as he passed out of the room with his brain all in a whirl.

"Edith, who is that man?" demanded Jones, the instant the door had closed behind him.

"Really, sir, I didn't ask his name. Shall I call him back?"

"Edith, I——"

"Mr. Jones, by what right do you question me? you are not my keeper; that you are my traveling companion is no choice of mine."

"But it is your uncle's wish, and you know it. Your father promised me your hand and——"

"Enough! I shall never marry you; no, not if it were forty times my father's wish!" cried Edith, with flushed face.

And without another word she retreated to an inner room and closed the door.

Jones stood there, furious.

"You little vixen!" he muttered; "you will do this and you won't do that! Wait! I have sworn to marry you, and I mean to do it! I must do it, for——"

He paused abruptly, turned on his heel and hurried down-stairs.

When he gained the street he looked up and down, as if expecting to catch sight of the "trunk man."

He was not disappointed.

George was standing near the cigar store on the opposite side of the way, but now, seeing his cousin, he walked hurriedly toward Bush street.

"Hello, Gus!"

A man had stepped out of the hotel and approaching Jones, familiarly slapped him on the back.

He was a rakish, dissipated-looking fellow—a perfect type of a Western gambler.

From appearances he must have known Mr. J. Gustavus Jones pretty well.

"Coming down to the rooms to have a game, Gus?" he asked.

"Hush!" breathed Jones. "Pete, you're the very man I want. Look there!"

"Where—what?"

"See that young fellow with the red whiskers going along over there on the other side of the street?"

"Yes, what of it?"

"Pete, that's George Lewis. Now is the time to redeem your promise. I've been on the watch for the last two days, and now the time has come. Can you do what you said?"

"You bet your sweet life I can, Gus, and I will!"

"But when?"

"Now."

"There's no time to lose."

"None shall be lost. I—— Man, what's the matter with you?"

"Quick! leave me. We must not be seen together!" breathed Jones. "Do you not see that old man looking out of the cigar store window?"

"Yes, who is he?"

But Jones had already turned away and was looking in the opposite direction.

"That man is Old King Brady, the detective!" he said in low, meaning tones.

"Thunder!"

"You see now?"

"No matter. I don't fear him, Gus."

"But I do. When will you do it?"

"Now."

"Where's the place?"

"It's No. 9 Brigg's Alley, Chinatown, between Pacific and Jackson, you know. Be there in twenty minutes' time. So long!"

Mr. J. Gustavus Jones did not answer.

He simply turned and entered the hotel.

CHAPTER VIII.

NO. 9 BRIGG'S ALLEY.

It was getting dark now. George Lewis had spent more time in his stolen interview with Edith Pinto than he had meant.

George had been a little less than two days in San Francisco. He had passed most of his time watching the Lick House, hoping for what had just now come to pass.

As he hurried along Montgomery street, his heart felt lighter than it had for days.

Since Edith trusted and believed in him what did he care for the opinion of the world?

"I'll take her advice and go to Hong Kong," he thought. "Once on board the steamer, even if I am recognized by Jones or the Pintos, what do I care? If I can put that $100,000 in Edith's hands I'll stay out there in China and make my fortune. I—— Well, what do you want?"

The interruption which had called forth the question was caused by a man who had brushed against him and now suddenly paused, planting himself in front of our hero in such a manner as to completely block the way.

"Beg pardon," he said, in a low voice, "but you are George Lewis of New York?"

George felt that his face was betraying him as he replied:

"You have made a mistake. I don't know you. Let me pass."

"Hold on a minute. I am a detective."

"A detective!"

"Oh, you needn't start so. I'm your friend if you will have it. I know there's a reward out for your capture, but I don't care a rap about money. I'd rather serve my friends; always was that way. That's why I'm poor."

"What can you mean? I'm in a hurry. I tell you again you've mistaken me for someone else. Let me pass."

The alleged detective, who was no less person than Mr. J. Gustavus Jones' friend Pete, looked warily behind him, and bending down whispered one word in George's ear.

"Steers!"

This was the word, and perhaps Pete would have hesitated even to be thus brief, had he caught sight of a certain tall figure which stood watching him from the concealment of a doorway on the opposite side of the street.

George started violently. He could not help it.

"Steers," replied Pete. "Steers. You understand."

"I don't want to have anything to do with you."

"Don't be hasty. I'm your friend, because you're a friend of my friend Steers. You think he's dead—you are wrong. He's alive and at this very moment in a house not ten blocks away. He wants to see you."

George was thunderstruck.

He felt that it could not be true.

"It can't be so!" he exclaimed, impulsively. "I saw him die. I——"

"Hold on! Not a word. Some one may overhear us. Come."

"No, no!"

"But you must. The man is very weak. He is sure to die. He wants to sign a confession. It is for your own good."

More talk followed.

Completely thrown off his guard at last George yielded.

"How could this man possibly be lying?" he thought.

They hurried up Clay street together, and in a few moments found themselves in a foreign land.

Blue bloused men and bareheaded women were swarming everywhere; pig-tails were as plenty as huckleberries in a New England Pasture, over every doorway were signs in unintelligible characters, and every word spoken by the crowd through which they elbowed their way was but gibberish to George's ears.

They were in Chinatown, San Francisco's most peculiar quarter. It was New York's Mott street over again, only on a very extended scale.

As they hurried along, Pete kept up a constant chatter. Nothing, in short, could have exceeded the friendliness of his manner. George was thrown pretty well off his guard at last.

"It must be all straight," he reflected. "With Steer's confession to back me, and the $100,000 to turn over to Edith, I can clear my good name beyond a question, and then——"

"Here we are!" exclaimed his conductor, suddenly turning into a narrow alley on their left.

"But this is a terrible place. What made him come here?"

"Where would you have him go? To a hotel? No, no! He only wants to right you, young man, and he'll do it, too. Come in."

Pete had opened a low door which seemed to communicate with the rear of a building facing Jackson street.

It was no time to hesitate now, and George followed him inside, only to see the folly of his whole action in the matter all in an instant.

The moment he crossed the threshold the door was slammed and Pete vanished.

To George's utter dismay he perceived that he stood in a small unfurnished apartment, dimly lighted by a single lamp, facing the man in black who on that fateful night in Chicago had dashed into the alley and plunged the knife into the heart of Stedman Steers.

"George Lewis!"

The man in black thrust his head forward, speaking in a low, hissing whisper.

In the dim light of the place George could scarcely see his features, for the big black beard, evidently as false as his own, concealed completely everything but the nose and eyes; yet there was something familiar about the face for all that.

"George Lewis!" he repeated in the same strange tone, "do you know why you have been brought here?"

George's heart seemed to leap to his throat. The man in black had cocked a revolver and thrust it full in his face.

"You know, probably. Why ask me?" he stammered.

"Yes, I know. You know me. You know what I did for Steers that night I followed you through the slums of Chicago. You know what I can do for you."

"What do you want?"

"Can't you guess?"

"To murder me as you did Steers? I'm a fool! I might have guessed!"

"Right, if you cross me. Wrong, if you do as I ask," hissed the man in black.

"What do you mean?"

"Do you see this little document? It is a legal transfer of the $100,000 Stedman Steers cabled to the Bank of Hong Kong in your name. Sign and you go free."

"Never!"

"Think."

"Never!"

"Look!"

Advancing a step, the man in black struck his foot heavily on the floor. Immediately a trap door dropped, revealing a dark, foul-smelling pit of unknown depth.

"Listen!" hissed the man, in that same strange voice, "sign or take the consequences. There is no alternative, no time to be wasted. I sail for Hong Kong on the Tycoon to-morrow at daybreak, and this document, with your signature attached, goes with me. Will you sign?"

"Never!" cried George. "I've been weak in this business. I own it. Whoever you are, you know what I mean, but I'll never sign that paper, no, not if it costs my life to refuse."

He sprang toward the door, and tried to wrench it open.

He expected a shot in the back if he ever in his life expected anything, but it did not come.

Instead, a sharp, clicking sound was heard, and before George had time to realize what was coming, the floor suddenly sank beneath him, and he went whirling down into the darkness below.

"I'll see you later, my stubborn young friend," hissed the man in black. "Then you'll sign that little document or die."

CHAPTER IX.

OLD KING BRADY'S BAD LUCK.

George Lewis, when he felt the trap-door give way beneath his feet, gave himself up for lost.

He scarcely heard the words hurled after him, by which he might have known that whatever his peril was it certainly was not immediate, for in an instant he found himself sprawling upon the damp earth unharmed.

Click went the trap above, and all was darkness—darkness enduring for an instant only—for in the next breath came a streak of light showing George a tall, elderly man standing over him grasping a dark lantern which he flashed in the face of the boy.

"George Lewis," said the man calmly, "get up."

George staggered to his feet.

"I have seen you before," he stammered. "I—"

"Hush! Not so loud. You know me?"

"I think so."

"Who do you think I am?"

"Old King Brady the detective," breathed George, in a despairing voice.

"You are right, but you needn't be so down about it. I am the best friend you've got, George Lewis. Listen to me. I was with Stedman Steers when he breathed his last in the Chicago alley. He told me then that you were innocent. I believed him. Have I believed a lie?"

"As God hears me you have not!" replied George solemnly. "You have believed the truth."

"Good!" said the detective in the same quiet tone. "I have been watching you for some hours, young man. You were inveigled into this place for a purpose. I saw you enter and came into this cellar, hoping to overhear your conversation. What has become of that man who accosted you in the street?"

"Oh, he was not the one. He was only a tool," whispered George. "Did you not see a man in black who——"

"What! A man in black?"

"Yes."

"Thunder! you don't mean it?"

"I do. If you were with Steers when he died you understand me. He has the stolen money. He——"

"Tell me all—quick. Speak low and trust me implicitly," whispered the detective, seizing him by the arm and drawing him from beneath the trap.

And George told his whole story in as few words as possible.

If he had but known it, he never did a wiser thing in his life.

Old King Brady listened patiently to the end, breathing, as George uttered the last words, an exclamation of disgust.

Nor was this without reason.

During a journey of two thousand miles, the detective had had but one end in view—to come up with the man in black.

He had heard of him at Omaha, and again at Ogden. That he had been a passenger on the Pacific bound train that he was certain; but after that all trace of him seemed to be lost.

Only that morning had Old King Brady arrived in San Francisco. He was busy questioning the clerks of the different hotels when he spied George in the disguise, which he had penetrated at a glance.

Though believing Steers' dying statement in a measure, he still doubted it in part, and followed.

When he saw Pete speak to the boy on Montgomery street, saw them go off together, he doubted still more. Now he was here.

Just then Old King Brady felt pretty well satisfied with his efforts.

"If that individual is actually going to sail on the Hong Kong steamer in the morning," he said, "we shall have no difficulty in capturing him. If he lied, the police of this city will help me. Young man, if you have told the truth you have nothing to fear. In ten days' time we shall be back in New York and everything will be made straight. Come! we will get out of this. There may yet be time to capture him before he leaves this house."

He led the way across the cellar to a flight of steps, and ascending, opened a door, and George, to his amazement, found himself in a busy street.

"This house is a notorious gambling den," explained the detective. "I saw you enter the alley and hurried round here to see how I could get in without being seen. A false key admitted me to the cellar, and I was just looking about for some means of getting up-stairs secretly when you fell."

"Are you going in?" questioned George, as they paused before the regular entrance to the place, a low door over which a bright light burned.

"Not without an officer. Ah, here is one now. Just one moment while I explain."

The explanation resulted in an immediate and thorough examination of the gambling house.

It was a disappointment.

Not a trace of either Pete or the man in black was to be found.

No one had seen any such persons. No one knew who they could be if their stories were to be believed.

The room opening on the alley was held under a different lease, and had been vacant for a long time it appeared.

"You haven't the faintest idea who he can be?" questioned the detective when, after the lapse of an hour, they found themselves on Montgomery street again.

"Not even the slightest," answered George, "but one thing I do know, he is disguised. He is a young man."

George, by the way, had discarded his own disguise now. He felt called upon to do just as the detective told him; he did not know whether to consider himself under arrest or not.

"Are you sure? I caught a glimpse of him once in Mr. Pinto's office," answered Old King Brady. "I saw him again on the train at Jersey City. Then he was smooth-faced and evidently a man of forty at least."

"I don't know how to account for it. When I saw him on the train he looked old as you say, but with his false beard somehow the upper part of his face looked different."

"Fancy of yours probably."

"I don't think so."

"We will inquire on board the Hong Kong steamer," said the detective. "He must have engaged his passage. Probably they can give us a clew."

Calling a cab Old King Brady hastily directed to be driven to the China steamer. He didn't take the trouble to mention the name.

Nor, busy as he was questioning George about the various points in the case, did he think anything about the matter until the hack rolled out on a wharf where all was bustle and confusion, just as might have been expected when a steamer was about to start upon a voyage half around the world.

Old King Brady jumped out, and bidding George follow him ran hastily up the gang-plank and inquired for the purser.

"He's below in his state-room," said the officer on deck. "He's very busy, but I guess he'll see you. You know we're just about to start."

It is strange when a man has a certain idea fixed in his mind how closely he will cling to it.

Old King Brady thought the mate meant that they were to sail in the morning, and never even dreamed of attaching any other meaning to his words.

The purser was found in his little room, buried up to his eyes amid a pile of papers.

Old King Brady hastily introduced himself, and inquired for the man in black.

"Yes," replied the purser, "there is such a man on my list, just precisely the person you describe, except that he is clean shaved."

"That's all right. The beard was false. What name did he give?"

The purser referred to his passenger list.

"The name," he said presently, "is Gunn—Galloway Gunn."

"Assumed, of course," muttered old King Brady. "Did he say when he was coming aboard?"

"Why, he's aboard now."

"You don't mean it!"

"He came on board early in the evening."

"Impossible!"

"I tell you I know what I am saying!" snapped the purser, evidently a little put out. "However, I'm too busy to talk any more about it. The number of Mr. Gunn's state-room is 53, lower deck. You'd better be quick about it, too."

"Many thanks. I shall take him off if he's here, you may be sure."

"Take the——"

The last words of the purser were unheard, for Old King Brady hurried George away.

"It can't be the same man," said George.

"I'm afraid not, but we'll humor that fellow and make sure. If it is not we'll see what can be done next. You wait here in the cabin. I'll be back in a moment's time."

He hurried away, looking at the numbers of the state-rooms.

It took but a moment to find 53.

It was one of the outside rooms on the lower deck opening upon the guards.

The door stood partially ajar, and as the detective approached a man suddenly shot out and moved forward.

Old King Brady's heart gave a great thump, for notwithstanding the uncertain light he recognized the man whom he had chased from Mr. Pinto's office two weeks before.

"One moment, friend."

The man turned and shot a terrified glance at the detective.

"Old King Brady, by time!" he exclaimed, and started to run.

"Hold there!" cried the detective, springing after him.

But the man in black only ran the faster; coming presently to a partition which separated the after part of the deck from the steerage; here was a winding ladder so constructed that to ascend it one must go outside the guards and overhang the water before the deck could be gained.

The man in black leaped upon the ladder and ran nimbly up.

Old King Brady followed, but just as he had reached the middle of the ladder the steamer gave a sudden lurch and seemed to grind heavily against the wharf.

The shock was as tremendous as it was unexpected. Before Old King Brady realized what had happened, he had tumbled backward into the bay.

Meanwhile George had been sitting comfortably in the cabin when the shock came.

He was lost in thought, so much so that he had not noticed the heavy clanking of the engine which began a moment or so before the shock.

Now he leaped up half in terror.

"What's the matter?" he cried.

There was no one in the cabin—not a soul.

George rushed out on deck in no little trepidation.

To his dismay he saw that the steamer had already swung clear of the wharf and was heading toward the Golden Gate.

"What's this! surely we haven't started," he exclaimed, seeing a sailor near him.

"Well, it looks very much like it," replied the man.

"But I thought the Tycoon wasn't going to start till daybreak? I must go ashore!"

"Why, this ain't the Tycoon," said the sailor; "she's on the new line. This is the regular boat, the Shanghae. She's bound for Calcutta and Hong Kong."

CHAPTER X.

OLD KING BRADY ON THE PACIFIC.

"Do you feel better?"

"Oh, yes; much better."

"Can you stand? Can you walk?"

"I—I guess I can stand. Why not? I feel strangely weak though—what has happened to me? somehow I can't think."

"What has happened? Can it be possible that you don't know what has happened?"

"I'm afraid I don't. I feel as if I had been asleep for a month. I wish you'd tell me what it all means."

It was Old King Brady, the detective, and an official-looking person with epaulets and gold lace about his cap who were speaking.

The old detective found himself lying upon a couch in a little room which he rightly conjectured to be the stateroom of some steamer, while the official individual stood half inside and half outside of the open door.

"Why, I want your ticket if you've got one, your money if you haven't."

"Ticket! Ticket for where?"

"Hon-Kong, China!"

"Great heaven! Am I on my way to China?"

"Certainly."

"What steamer is this?"

"This is the Tycoon. I am its purser. My friend, this state-room is wanted by the party who engaged it, Mr. J. Gustavus Jones, a gentleman traveling in company with a New York family named Pinto. He kindly let you remain here because they brought you here, and——"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Old King Brady, staggering to his feet, "there's a mystery to be explained here. You ain't the purser of the Tycoon?"

"Well, I rather think I am."

"You ain't the man I saw before. You ain't the man who told me about that fellow Gunn—there's some terrible mistake! I had no idea of going to China! I—ah! I begin to remember. I fell overboard, did I not?"

"I don't know whether you fell overboard or not, but I know you were fished out of San Francisco harbor on the end of a boat hook, and dumped down here half dead by the fellows who rescued you. They said you fell off the China steamer. I had my doubts then about its being the Tycoon, and now I'm sure it was not. I'll bet forty to one you were drunk, and tumbled off the Shanghae, the opposition steamer which lay on the other side of the slip."

Here was a singular situation for Old King Brady.

Yet the purser was right. He had hit the nail squarely on the head except when he intimated that the detective was drunk.

Now the memory of all that had happened came rushing back to Old King Brady's mind like the recollection of a dream.

He saw himself struggling in the water after his fall from the steamer, he saw himself rescued by strong hands and drawn into a rowboat; he remembered saying faintly that he had fallen from the China steamer and wanted to get back, but beyond that all was a blank.

The purser listened to all he had to say patiently. Soon they began to understand each other better than at first.

"You see I'm right," he said at last. "Those men knew nothing of the new steamer, so they put you on the old one. You remained unconscious all night and now here you are bound for Hong Kong against your will."

"It can't be helped."

"Decidedly not. Can you pay your fare? Have you got any money?"

"Money—well, yes. People say I'm worth a million."

"Oh!" said the astonished purser. "What's your name?"

"Brady, I am generally called Old King Brady."

"You don't mean it? Old King Brady, the detective? Well, well! I have often heard of you."

"I am no one else. Please assign me a stateroom at once. It is all right; I am not sorry I'm going to Hong Kong."

Great was the astonishment and interest of the passengers on the Tycoon when Old King Brady's story came to be whispered about.

As for the detective himself, he said but little and made few acquaintances as the days dragged wearily on.

The members of the Pinto party he particularly avoided.

So far as Edith or her uncle and aunt were concerned there was no difficulty in this. Edith was in deep mourning and seldom spoke to any one. She had never heard of Old King Brady, so why should she think of him now?

The one person of all the passengers whom the detective found it most difficult to avoid, was Mr. J. Gustavus Jones, who at all times and seasons persisted in thrusting himself upon him.

Old King Brady did not entirely reject his overtures of friendship. He seemed to be studying this brainless dude and often tried to draw him out but with no success.

So the days lengthened into weeks and the weeks sped by, until at last it was announced one morning that the Tycoon was within twenty-four hours sail of Hong Kong.

Thus far the weather had been delightful, and broken by scarcely a storm, but that night when the sun went down in a blaze of glory over the eastern sea, the captain, who happened to meet old King Brady on the promenade deck, predicted a storm.

"We may beat it," he said. "Give me fifteen hours and I'll be at our dock. Still it looks rusty over there in the east."

It may have looked rusty to the captain of the Tycoon, but it didn't to old King Brady when he retired to his state-room. He thought he had never seen a more beautiful night.

The sea was as calm as a mill pond and the stars were shining brightly. Lulled by the clank of the engines and the gentle motion of the vessel, old King Brady was soon asleep.

It was very odd, viewed in the light of what subsequently happened, but nevertheless it is an actual fact.

Somewhere along about midnight old King Brady had a dream, and in his dream he thought he saw the man in black, that mysterious Mr. Gunn, who was certainly not on the steamer.

It seemed to him that this man had the stolen money, and that they were struggling for its possession. Just as the detective found himself getting the worst of it he awoke.

What was the matter?

For a moment he did not know whether he was standing on his head or his heels.

The steamer was pitching wildly; in the cabin, outside and on the deck above the utmost confusion seemed to reign.

Loud, hoarse voices were heard shouting, women screamed and children cried.

Old King Brady pulled on his clothes and started for the deck.

He had all he could do to get there. The wind almost swept him from his feet, a big wave breaking over the rail drenched him to the skin.

"Get back! get back!" roared the mate, "there's the deuce to pay. We are caught in a typhoon, and this rotten old tub is leaking like a sieve. Help to keep the women quiet if you can but don't bother us up here."

Old King Brady hurried to the lower deck, and sought entrance to the cabin by the nearest door.

It was not the door he had passed out by, but the one communicating with the passage upon which the stateroom of the dudish Mr. Jones was located—the room in which Old King Brady had been hastily placed when first brought on board the Tycoon.

But the detective scarcely remembered this as he hurried toward the cabin. Indeed, it is doubtful if he would have thought of it at all had not the door of this particular room been suddenly flung open, and out bounced a person who seemed in a tremendous hurry.

To Old King Brady's utter amazement he found himself in sudden and violent collision with the man in black.

It was startling. Particularly so since he had been on board the Tycoon almost a month and had never encountered this person before.

Now it is seldom that Old King Brady loses his presence of mind. He did not lose it now, but promptly grappled with the fellow. As he did so something fell to the floor.

"Let go of me! Let go, or I'll stab you!" hissed the man, struggling violently, and there came the flash of a knife blade in the uncertain light.

Old King Brady, with a twist as quick as lightning, caught the knife and jerked it away.

"Hold on! I know you!" he said sternly. "Surrender, or——"

"To the boats! To the boats! The steamer is sinking!" shouted an excited person who suddenly came dashing through the door.

He did not seem to observe the struggle, for his face was deathly pale, and his hair all on end with horror.

In his excitement he ran right into them, and the first thing Old King Brady knew he was sprawling on the floor.

"Lost! the steamer lost! Oh, my God, this is a judgment!" he heard the man in black groan as tearing himself free he went darting after the alarmist who was already springing away.

He was gone before the detective could stop him, though as a matter of fact, there was no effort made to do it, for as the detective picked himself up he suddenly found his attention taken by something else.

It was a large leather wallet, such as bank messengers use. Evidently this was what the man in black had dropped. That he yielded so tamely showed how completely he had lost his head.

"It's of no use to follow him," muttered the detective. "We are all in the same boat, and if that fellow told the truth it's sink or swim. Strange how I dreamed this very thing. Let me see—ah! I thought as much! This tells the tale!"

What?

He had opened the wallet under the flickering light.

It was stuffed with $1000 bills.

CHAPTER XI.

EDITH CALLS FOR HELP.

THE sudden announcement that he was already on the way to China did not at first disturb George Lewis half as much as it did Old King Brady, for in any case George had intended to go; but when he came to question further and ascertained that he was on the wrong steamer his chagrin was terrible to the last degree.

"Great heavens! what am I to do?" he exclaimed.

"Do! Why, you'll have to go with us, that's all," was the reply he got.

"But I can't. I have no money to pay my fare, and——"

"One moment, young man. I will pay your fare rather than see you left in a hole," spoke a voice behind them.

George looked round, and to his amazement saw the man in black calmly standing there. He was beardless now and looked precisely as he did when Steadman Steers pushed him off the train.

"You!" he gasped.

"Yes, I'm right here. I'm going to be kinder to you than your friend Steers was to me. I'm going to help you out of a hole."

"But——"

"You thought I was dead. Is that what you mean to say?"

"Yes."

"You see I ain't dead, but Steers is. You also see I know."

"You ought to," breathed George, looking about him, wondering what had become of Old King Brady. The officer, with whom he had been talking, had stepped away.

"Why do you say that?"

"You know."

"You think I killed Steers?"

"I don't think—I know it."

"Softly, softly. Do I look like the man who killed Steers?"

"You were disguised then with a false beard and——"

"Wrong. I haven't had a false beard on since I left New York."

"What's the use of talking? Didn't you have one on when you enticed me into that house in China Alley to-night?"

"Wrong again. I enticed nobody. 'Tain't my business. As for China Alley, I don't know what you mean. George Lewis, when Steers threw me off that train I was fortunate enough to fall into a ditch. That's why I escaped. Oh, you needn't look round for Old King Brady. He tumbled overboard awhile ago, and was rescued and carried on board the Tycoon, where your friends the Pintos are and that precious cousin of yours, Mr. part-his-name-in-the-middle Jones. No doubt he'll be on the way to Hong Kong by morning, but this is the fastest steamer, and we are going to get there first. George Lewis, yours truly, I like you—you're no fool. That's why I'm willing to help you out of this hole. How did you expect to get to China without money, though?"

George blushed. Even if he had been less amazed he would not have told that Edith Pinto had promised to help him out.

"For Heaven sake who are you?" he stammered. "To-night you——"

"No, I didn't!" interrupted the other. "You are wrong. My name is Gunn—Galloway Gunn. I never did; it was some other fellow, I assure you, my dear boy, but I'm going to; you can bet your sweet life on that!"

"Would you have any objection to letting me know what you are talking about?" cried George, now pretty well aroused.

"Not in the least," laughed the man in black. "Oh, certainly not. Why should I? I'm going to get to Hong Kong ahead of the man who murdered Steadman Steers and draw that $100,000—that's all. My dear boy, it's as simple as A B C."

But it did not so prove to be quite so simple a proposition as Mr. Galloway Gunn thought for when he propounded it.

After a prosperous voyage the steamer Shanghae, of the new line between San Francisco and Hong Kong, went ashore on the Wang-choo Islands in the same terrible storm which overtook the Tycoon.

It was a terrible affair that shipwreck. Did space permit we should be more than pleased to give the details, but unfortunately such is not the case. We must hurry on if we ever expect to get around the world, and can only stop to say that hundreds lost their lives that night, while the steamer itself proved a total wreck, leaving George Lewis alone and penniless in a little Chinese fishing village, of which he did not even know the name until morning dawned and the storm had passed.

———

"Boat—no. I'm sorry. I don't believe you can get a boat for money on the island that will take you over to Hong Kong. The only decent boat there is in Loo-Chong belongs to me, and I let it out to a man only half an hour ago. One of the Tycoon's passengers, I guess."

George Lewis turned pale.

"The Tycoon—you mean the Shanghai?" he stammered.

"No, I don't. You were on the Shanghai, and have been asleep for the last three or four hours," replied Mr. Buckslee, the British resident at Loo-Chong, the fishing village mentioned above; "since your people were brought in fours to look out for, two boat loads of shipwrecked passengers have arrived. They are from the steamer Tycoon, of the regular line to San Francisco. She went down last night in the storm."

George staggered back, like one suddenly receiving a blow.

"My God, this is terrible! Both steamers lost! Did you hear the names of any of the rescued passengers? Was there a lady named——"

"There wasn't a solitary woman among the lot. The boats in which the women were all foundered," rattled the resident, who appeared to be a kindly, sympathetic sort of a man. "Terrible, wasn't it? By gracious, you look as if you cared more about this than your own shipwreck, while last night——"

"One moment—you are sure there were no women among the passengers?"

"Certain."

"Who was the man you let have the boat? What do the others intend to do?"

"One question at a time. The others intend to start a Sampan over to Hong Kong to get them to send a steamer. The man who took my boat was tall and slim, had black hair and black beard—in other words, he was a man in black."

"The man in black!" exclaimed George. "No, that can't be—the man in black is dead!"

But he was talking to himself more than to the resident. The truth was, George Lewis had received a pretty severe blow.

If the Tycoon had gone down and no women saved, where was Edith?

Dead, he feared. The mere thought was enough to send George's failing spirits to the lowest depths.

"I must get to Hong Kong at once," he reflected. "I must get that money from the bank for Edith's sake, for should she be alive, I could never face her and feel that I had not made every effort. I don't like that about the man in black."

But it could not be Gunn, the man who had been with him on on the Shanghae, he thought.

Hardly, since he had seen Mr. Galloway Gunn go over the side of that self same steamer, following the retreat of an enormous wave.

Weeks had passed since the brief conversation above recorded between George Lewis and the man in black.

At the moment when George saw Mr. Gunn go over the Shanghae's side, tried to save him and heard his last despairing cry, he knew no more of him than when they first met.

Always cheerful, ever joking, the man in black had been the life of the steamer. He was just as kind and pleasant to George Lewis as a brother could have been.

Against every protest he paid his fare and forced money upon him to meet the trivial expenses on the steamer.

He would talk of anything and everything except one topic—the great Pinto case, the defalcation, the murder, the money.

On these points he was actually dumb.

"Some day you'll understand all about it," he would say when George persisted in raising the subject. "Until then have patience. I'm no murderer, neither am I a thief. Wait."

George doubted, but what could he do?

"I'll make friends with him and draw him out," he thought. "He's got the money, of course; that's why he's so liberal. When we get to Hong Kong I'll see the American consul and tell him the whole story. If the money is in my name at the bank I can understand why he's so friendly. He may find his match in me yet."

"I'm going to Hong Kong and I'm going now," said George, decidedly. How far is it?"

"Not over fifteen miles," replied the resident, pointing off upon the water. "Do you see that point of land?"

"Yes."

"Well, that's on the Island of Hong-Kong. But for the highlands you could see the city."

"Is it possible? I had no idea we were so near. In an hour we would have been in."

"You would. It is a very unfortunate affair."

"Look here," said George, "it is absolutely necessary that I should get to Hong Kong as soon as possible. Can't I get one of these what d'ye call 'em and go?"

"Sampan; do you mean?"

"Yes."

"Very likely. You know what they are?"

"No."

"Something like a catamaran. They go like lightning."

"Good! How long since your boat left?"

"Why, I don't think he can be more than gone," said the resident. "He had a young man with him, and they only left here a few moments ago. Suppose we go down to the wharf and find out. I can't see anything of the boat yet on the water there. Perhaps he'd take you along."

"Thunder! Why didn't you say so before?"

"Didn't think of it. Come on. I'd like to help you if I can, young man, for I admire your Yankee pluck."

They hurried to the water side, elbowing their way through the crowd of Chinese fishermen and sponge gatherers.

"Pshaw! We are too late!" exclaimed the resident, pointing to a fair size sail-boat which was just leaving the wharf.

There were two persons in the boat—a man and a boy.

As he gazed upon them George felt his heart give a great thump.

It was not Mr. Gunn, most assuredly, but it was the very man, even to the beard, who tried to force him to sign the paper in that den in the slums of San Francisco.

"Stop him! He must be stopped!" cried George, in tones loud enough to reach the boat.

The man in black half rose and looked back upon him with an evil leer of triumph. This he saw plainly, but he scarcely heeded it, for at the same moment the boy sprang up, and shouted:

"George! Oh, George!"

"There's something wrong there!" exclaimed the resident. "Look! look! He struck the boy then! He knocked him down in the bottom of the boat."

But George did not answer directly. His lips were set—his whole frame seemed trembling with rage as he grasped the resident's arm.

"Help me to follow them!" he breathed. "Help me, for heaven's sake! That man is a murderer and a scoundrel. It is no boy he has with him, but an innocent girl. I must save her from him if it costs my life."

What ailed the young man? Was he mad?

By no means. But, mad or sane, he could scarcely have failed to recognize Edith Pinto's voice.

———

CHAPTER XII.

OLD KING BRADY WINS THE RACE.

"IT'S no use. We might as well give it up. I tell you what it is, young man, I feel proud of that boat of mine."

It was the British resident at Loo Chong who spoke.

He was seated with George Lewis between two stout Chinamen, who were giving their entire attention to the somewhat difficult undertaking of guiding a Sampan among the shipping, which had taken shelter in Hong Kong harbor from the storm, while at no great distance ahead the little sail boat could be seen making for the nearest of a long line of stone piers.

"We mustn't give it up, Mr. Buckslee! Indeed we mustn't!" said George. "I have told you all. You know my story and understand the situation. That is certainly Edith Pinto, and she must be saved from that scoundrel at any cost."

"Impossible, me dear boy—that is impossible to overtake them before they land."

"Can't we head them off somehow?"

"I don't see how. We've been trying our best ever since we left the islands. Bless my soul, but it was beautiful the way that boat of mine showed us her heels."

George sank back in despair. "What can I do?" he murmured. "What if he has killed her? Since that time we saw him strike her she has not been visible. She may be dead."

"Are you sure it's the girl?" questioned Mr. Buckslee.

"Absolutely certain. I would know Edith's voice among a thousand."

"What you have told me certainly gives matters a rusty look," said Mr. Buckslee, "and yet I never once dreamed that the man's companion might be a girl in disguise. As soon as we land I'll take you straight to the chief of police, a particular friend of mine. If there's any such thing as catching the fellow he'll be sure to do it. But why should the girl disguise herself? That's what I can't see."

"I'm almost crazy over it," sighed George. "It was very kind of you to come with me, though I'm sure I don't know what I can do to repay you."

"I never give the cold shoulder to any one in trouble, my boy. As soon as you told me how the case stood I was only too glad to go. There! What did I tell you? They are landing now. Faster, boys! Faster! Give her a twist, so as to catch what wind there is, for it's little enough, dear knows!"

It was kind in Mr. Buckslee, very kind.

As soon as George explained the situation to him he entered into the matter heart and soul.

A sampan was found and men to work it. In less than half an hour they were skimming over the water toward England's great commercial city in China, but the sail-boat had too great a start.

Little by little the sampan gained upon it; had the distance been greater they certainly would have overhauled the boat—all that had been needed was time. It was too late now.

When Mr. Buckslee and George leaped out upon the wharf the sail-boat was empty and it's occupants nowhere to be seen.

"What are you going to do?" asked Mr. Buckslee.

"The best thing I can do is to go straight to the bank and see about the money—don't you think so?"

"To see about it, yes, but not to draw it. Of course you don't think of attempting that?"

"Well, I suppose it would be better not, although it is in my name."

"Don't think of it. See the police first. Start right and you will end right. Wait till I speak to the wharfinger here; perhaps he can tell us how they left."

It was in a cab it appeared.

As far as the wharfinger observed the boy seemed all right, and went with his companion willingly enough.

Mr. Buckslee began to doubt whether George had not allowed himself to be deceived after all.

"We'll go to the bank at once," he said, "and see about the money."

A cab was found and away they rattled.

George, too much excited to notice the many strange sights which went flitting past him, could scarcely contain himself until they reached that most solid of Asiatic financial institutions, the Bank of Hong Kong.

He leaped out and hurried inside, followed by Mr. Buckslee.

"Is there a sum of money here to the credit of George Lewis?" he asked of the teller's clerk.

"Who are you?" asked the teller.

"I am George Lewis."

The teller smiled.

"Odd," he said. "Are there two of your name in Hong Kong?"

"There may be forty for all I know," replied George. "I only want to say to you——"

"Pardon me. There is no use in your saying anything any more than there was in that sour-looking fellow in black who was just here a few moments ago making inquiries about the same business. The money is no longer here."

"No longer here!" cried George, with a start. "Did you give it to that man?"

"No. I just told you that. A hundred thousand dollars was telegraphed to this bank from New York in the name of George Lewis a few weeks since, but an hour ago it was paid over to a certain person by order of the American consul and the police."

"The name of this person?"

"Grady, I believe. Stay, though; that wasn't his name.

"Was he an old man?" demanded George in wonder.

"Yes, tall fellow with pleasant face. He was on the Tycoon which went down outside last night. Rescued by a small steamer which happened to come along and picked a whole lot of people out of boats."

"It's Old King Brady, the detective!" breathed George with a sigh of relief. "Well, well, the money has fallen into good hands."

Ah! it is one thing to get money and another to keep it.

This lesson Old King Brady was destined to have pretty thoroughly hammered into him before he saw the last of Hong Kong.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE GREEN BOTTLE

It was certainly Old King Brady who got the money. George Lewis made no mistake when he boldly asserted as much to the British Resident at Loo Chong, at the time the surprise met them at the bank.

When the Tycoon went down in the darkness and storm that night, Old King Brady found himself among the saved.

But there were hundreds not so fortunate.

One boat in particular, loaded down with women and children, was engulfed before it got twenty feet away from the sinking steamer. In the confusion Old King Brady completely lost sight of the man in black, but he knew that the Pinto party, all except Edith and Mr. J. Gustavus Jones, were in this boat.

What became of Mr. Jones and Edith he did not know, for at that time the detective was too busy working to help the helpless to observe all that was going on.

A passing steamer, a small affair, plying between Hong Kong and some of the neighboring islands, had picked up the passengers in the boat in which Old King Brady had embarked, and brought them to the city.

The first act of the detective was to call at the American consul's and make himself known, which led to the drawing of the money from the bank, as has been said.

Long before this the detective counted up the contents of the pocket-book, which consisted mostly of thousand dollar bills, and found that with the addition of the money telegraphed to the bank by Steers the sum stolen from Mr. Pinto's office was diminished less than eight hundred dollars.

It was a big responsibility to be in possession of several hundred thousand dollars of "other people's money," and the first thing that struck Old King Brady when, in company with the chief of the Hong Kong police, he left the bank, was the advisability of getting rid of it as soon as he could.

"I think I will telegraph it all to New York," he said. "I've got more money of my own about me than I ought to have. I don't want the responsibility of this as well."

But this proved to be impossible. Owing to the storm not a telegraph line was working.

Thus it happened that when, some hours later the detective found himself strolling along the water front trying to learn something of the other boats, he still had the money about him in the identical leather wallet which he had taken from the man in black.

This naturally bothered him and kept his thoughts upon the man himself. He was wondering how he came to suddenly appear on board the Tycoon; pondering upon which of the passengers he could be if he was in disguise, as he unquestionably was; wondering if he had been drowned or whether he had been rescued, or whether ——"

Right at this point the detective's reflections were rudely broken in upon, for chancing to raise his eyes he was astonished to see walking toward him a man in black clothes and tall hat, the identical individual whom he had seen on two occasions waving farewell from the rear platform of a train!

It was the man in black without the beard.

Though there was certainly a marked resemblance between them it was not the man with whom he had had the encounter on the Tycoon.

The recognition was mutual and its effect instantaneous.

The man in black turned, and making one dive into a narrow alley disappeared.

"That's not the man I got the money from, but it is the man I chased out of Mr. Pinto's office," was the instant conclusion arrived at by Old King Brady.

He resolved to capture him at any cost.

Springing into the alley he soon found himself involved in a perfect maze of cross byways; it seemed as if these might be the lowest slums of the city.

Still he managed to keep the man in sight and he ran on, pausing at last before an ale house bearing an English sign, and evidently a resort for sailors, into which he was certain he had seen the fugitive run.

Old King Brady ought to have felt that a little caution was needed now, but he did not.

It was a desperate looking place, close down by the water's edge. Indeed, as the detective afterward discovered it backed upon the bay, and from its peculiar situation at the end of one of the cross alleys it was a comparatively deserted spot in which—oddly enough for Hong Kong—not a Chinaman was to be seen; no one was in sight in fact, but two sailors almost too drunk to navigate. It was useless, of course, to hope to gain any information about the place from them.

Now Old King Brady did a very rash, not to say foolish thing.

Forgetting the large sum of money in his possession in his anxiety to capture the man in black, he boldly pushed the door open and entered the place, realizing the folly of his act only when it was too late to draw back.

"Thunder and Mars! it's Old King Brady!" exclaimed a voice the moment the door opened, and instantly two men sprang upon him—one a rough-looking fellow, evidently the proprietor of the place, the other the man in black, with the beard—the identical individual from whom he had captured the money on the Tycoon.

Stretched upon the floor lay the man he had been following, his arms and legs tied with ropes, and a cheap red handkerchief thrust into his mouth.

Never had the detective been taken more completely by surprise.

He attempted to spring back and draw his revolver, but it was a useless effort.

Like a flash the two men flung themselves upon him and threw him backward to the floor.

"Hold him—hold him tight!" breathed the man in black. "You don't know what a terrible fellow he is."

"I've got him, Jim, don't you make any mistake about that," was the reply.

The speaker's face was right above Old King Brady's now, and he saw, to his amazement, that in spite of his red face and general coarse appearance, he bore no slight resemblance to that dudish attache of the Pinto party, Mr. J. Gustavus Jones!

"What shall we do—tie him?" whispered the man in black; "some one may come in at any moment. I can't keep my hand over his mouth long, he's biting me. Ow—ouch!"

"Hold on just a minute! I'll fix him!" hissed the other. "You're sure he's got the money?"

"Sure he took it—yes, here it is!"

His unoccupied hand was thrust into the side-pocket of the detective's coat, and to Old King Brady's intense disgust, out came the leather wallet. It was enough to drive a sane man mad!

With a desperate effort Old King Brady half raised himself and worked one hand free, dealing the man in black a terrific blow between the eyes, which sent him reeling.

In a moment he might have gained the victory had not the other seized him by the throat and pressed him back, holding him down with a terrible grip.

"Quick, Jim! Quick!" he hissed. "The green bottle on the second shelf back of the bar! Give him one dose—that'll fix him. I'll try to hold him till it's done."

Poison!

In that awful moment Old King Brady felt that escape was impossible; he tried to wrench himself free—tried to throw off that terrible clutch, but all in vain.

His eyes alone were free to act now, and instinctively they followed the movements of the man in black, saw him dart behind the bar, saw him seize the bottle, saw him return again and then the last despairing moment came.

It was no use. With two hundred pounds of solid flesh upon him the detective could not move.

"Give it to him! Give it to him! Jam it into his mouth—mash his teeth—anything, so long as he gets it!"

It was done in an instant. Before the detective could fairly realize that it was too late, the contents of the green bottle were gurgling down his throat.

It tasted bitter, and yet not wholly disagreeable, but the fumes seemed to fly to his head like lightning. For a few seconds, room, men, bar, bottles, everything went swimming around like a teetotum. After that Old King Brady knew no more.

CHAPTER XIV.

MR. J. GUSTAVUS JONES.

Wholly unconscious of course of the fate which had befallen old King Brady, George Lewis left the bank in company with Mr. Buckslee, with his spirits at the lowest ebb.

"What's to be done now?" he asked.

"I'm sure I can't undertake to advise you; this is a very serious matter. You are an American, go to the American consul and place yourself in his hands."

"I was thinking of that."

"It's the best way."

"And you? Do you go back to Loo-Chong on the sampan?"

"Oh, no. I shall sail my boat back. How unfortunate that you didn't come to me sooner; but it can't be helped."

"I wish you would go with me to the consulate," said George. "I'm so confused with all that has happened that I scarcely know what to say."

"I wish I could," replied Mr. Buckslee, "but now that I am in Hong Kong I am anxious to attend to a little business. You go, and it will probably be all right. You'll be sure to meet the detective there, you know. You say you and he are friends. I'll see you at Manning's Hotel at eight o'clock this evening. I shall not go back to the islands to-day."

But when eight o'clock came George found himself as much at sea as ever. The day had passed and he had accomplished nothing at all.

The American consul was not to be seen. He had gone out of town, but would return next morning. As for Old King Brady, beyond the fact that such a person had been at the consulate, nothing could be learned.

Now George could not bring himself to go to the police, so, instead, he proceeded to look up the fate of the Tycoon's passengers, first registering at Manning's Hotel, which he did with no little trepidation, as he had not a cent in his name.

On the list of the saved was the name of Old King Brady, but among those lost were Mr. and Mrs. Pinto, Miss Edith Pinto, and Mr. J. Gustavus Jones.

Now for the first time George began to question whether he might not have been mistaken.

What could have induced Edith to assume male attire?

Why should she have gone willingly with the man in black, as she evidently had?

In the evening George found himself at Manning's Hotel again pretty well discouraged and thoroughly tired out.

Eight o'clock came, but it brought no Mr. Buckslee. George waited until nine, and then, coming to the conclusion that even the kind-hearted resident at Loo-Chong had deserted him, he sallied forth into the streets to cool his aching head.

It made no difference which way he went—he scarcely thought of it.

People in strange costumes moved past him unheeded. Chinamen, Japs, Malays—it was all alike.

It was not until he found himself at last in a lonely street, near the water front, where houses were few, and stables, sheds, and other rickety structures plenty, that he looked at his watch and discovered it to be nearly midnight. High time that he returned to the hotel if he meant to return at all.

Just as he was beginning to retrace his steps his ears were greeted by a shrill, piercing scream, which seemed to come from the upper window of a small, two-story frame dwelling, on his left.

"Help! Help!" came the cry again, and following close upon it was the sound of a heavy fall.

George felt his hair rise with horror, for he had instantly recognized the voice as Edith Pinto's.

Suddenly a shadow flitted behind the curtained window and the cry was repeated—immediately came another shadow, seizing the first by the arm and throat and seeming to pull it away, then for the third time came the cry again.

"Great heavens! that is certainly Edith's voice," gasped George. "What shall I do?"

He looked up and down the street, but could see no one. The lower part of the house was closed up and entirely dark. Even supposing he could break in, it would take time, and might be altogether too late.

Now Hong Kong, be it remembered, is to all intents a European city, and things are done there pretty much as they are with us.

Thus it is not surprising that the painters who had undertaken to paint the stable opposite this house from which the cry proceeded should have gone off with their job half finished, leaving their ladder behind them.

George, scarcely knowing what he was about, in his intense anxiety to find out what was going on in that room, made one dive for this ladder, dragged it across the street and placed it against the house.

Of course this was not accomplished without some noise, but it seemed to attract no particular attention, for all was now silent.

When he reached the top of the ladder he could hear a low moaning behind the curtain as he hastily thrust it aside, clutching ready in his hand the little revolver which Steers had insisted that he should buy in Chicago. As his hand touched the curtain some one spoke:

"Now then, Edith, is that enough. Will you hold your tongue?"

The voice was thick and the accents uncertain, but George had heard enough to send him springing into the room; the curtain was wrenched from its fastenings as he leaped through.

There before him stood the boy he had seen in

the sailcoat struggling in the grasp of the man in black.

"George, oh, George!" came the gasping cry. The man in black, startled by the intrusion, suddenly released his hold and staggered away.

"George Lewis!" he breathed. "Con—hic—confound you! You're just in time—hic—just in time to die!"

He thrust his hand behind him, no doubt for a revolver, but he was too late.

"Edith, I'm here to save you!" cried George.

He struck straight out from the shoulder as quick as a flash. No need of anything better than his fist.

The man in black dropped to the floor like a stone.

"Don't kill him—don't kill him, George! You don't know who he is!" cried Edith.

"No, but I will in a second," panted George.

Bending over, he tore from the head of the prostrate man a false beard and wig.

"Great heavens!" he gasped, starting back.

It had never occurred to him in all his deep reflection upon this mysterious business that the man whom he had chased across Hong Kong harbor was his cousin, Mr. J. Gustavus Jones!

CHAPTER XV.

A PAIR OF EYES.

"Is he dead? Oh, don't say he's dead."

"Dead drunk—that's all, Edith," replied George, looking down upon his cousin, as he lay white and still upon the floor.

"Oh, I don't know, I don't know! I'm afraid that blow on the head has killed him; but, oh, George, you can't tell how thankful I am you came."

Unhesitatingly, George flung his arms about the girl and pressed her to his heart.

Edith blushed and drew back.

"Can you do that, finding me as I am?" she whispered. "George, I love you more than ever for your confidence in me; but not a moment is to be lost. This house belongs to that scoundrel's brother; at any moment he may return, and——"

"To his brother! Ed Jones went out to China, sure enough!" exclaimed George. "I remember; he was a tough nut."

"Don't stop to talk," pleaded Edith. "Feel in his coat-pocket; you'll find something there—the money Mr. Steers stole from father, you know."

"No, Edith; impossible!"

"Yes; it's there."

"By thunder, you are right!" cried George, pulling a big leather wallet from his cousin's coat-pocket, which at a glance he saw was stuffed with thousand-dollar bills. "Edith, what is the meaning of all this?"

"It means murder, I'm afraid, George. He must have been the man you told me about—the man who killed Mr. Steers in the Chicago alley. Oh, God! how terrible all this is! Uncle and aunt lie at the bottom of the sea, and I wish I were with them! George, I am desperate. I——"

"Hush! I hear some one at the door below," whispered George. "There's certainly some one coming in."

"It's his brother. To think of it, George—only to think of it! I wonder you are willing to even look at me! It was Gus Jones who made me put on these clothes. He said the sailors would never let me go in the boat if they knew I was a woman."

"Come Edith! Come! Don't worry. We can escape by the window."

"You're sure he's not dead?"

"Oh, yes. He breathes. I shouldn't care though."

"But I would. I could never marry a murderer and I'm going to marry you if—"

Bang! Bang! Bang!

There was some one thumping at the door now at a terrible rate. It appeared to be locked on the inside.

"Come Edith—quick!"

He helped her through the window on to the ladder.

A moment later and they were hurrying around the corner, when they started to run, never stopping until the house had been left at a considerable distance behind.

Right before them lay a long wharf extended out into the bay, which instead of being dark and deserted, as one might expect, was alive with men, carts and drays.

Evidently the huge steamer which lay alongside was about to take advantage of a favoring tide and sail before daylight.

George wondered where the steamer went to, as he leaned back against a warehouse wall, half supporting Edith, who seemed all out of breath.

"Edith, I can't understand this at all!" he said. "It all came so quick that I——"

"George, you don't think of deserting me?"

The girl's voice was trembling now.

"Deserting you, Edith—never!"

"Listen to me. What I tell you about putting on these clothes is the truth. It was done in a moment of excitement; but when he came to me disguised, and hurried me into the boat, whispering that uncle and auntie were dead, and that now he proposed to force me to marry him—oh, it's too horrible! I can't talk about it, George, not even to you."

"Don't try. What's done can't be helped. The memory of the scenes of the wreck must be heartrending. I was wrecked, too, and I know Edith, and I have lots to tell you. I only want to know how you came to——"

"You mean how I came to be in that house," interrupted Edith, speaking very rapidly. "George, I went across from the island with him because I had to. Look at the position I was in! When I recognized you from the boat he struck me—struck me—just think of it! On the way over he told me about the money—told me that he had part and was going to have the rest. He took me to that house and before I knew what he was about he had me a prisoner in charge of his sister-in-law, a terrible woman. Then he went to the bank and drew the money I suppose, but he didn't come back until midnight and then came drunk. Oh, George, George! How fortunate you came as you did!"

"Don't say another word, dear," said George, consolingly. He knew that his cousin—his cousin! he had scarcely got used to the thought yet—had never drawn the money from the bank, and he began to think about Old King Brady, when suddenly a cab came dashing down to the wharf.

"Is this where the Calcutta steamer starts from?" called an excited-looking Englishman, thrusting his head out of the window.

"I'm sure I don't know, sir—there's a steamer of some kind down there," replied George.

"Lud, sir!" said the driver, "I know where I'm going. He will have me stop and give him a chance to inquire at every corner!"

The cab drove on.

Edith, meanwhile, was weeping. Poor girl, her nerves had received a terrible shock.

"What shall we do? What shall we do?" she wailed. "Poor uncle and auntie! Oh, George! George!"

"If you follow my advice, Edith," said George, quietly, "you'll remain just as you are. You look splendid in boys' clothes. This money belongs to you if it belongs to any one. Let's take this steamer and start for Calcutta this very night."

Perhaps it was the very boldness of the proposition which made it strike Edith favorably.

"George, I could never do it."

"You could do it with perfect safety—if you only knew how well you looked. You make a splendid boy."

"No, no!"

"Yes, yes, I say. We will go and the first thing we will do when we strike Calcutta is to get married. If we stay here there'll be no end of complications arise. I know and you don't!"

"George, I am yours anyhow—do as you like," replied Edith, letting her head fall upon her lover's shoulder and bursting into tears.

It was lucky that it was night and there were no electric lights down on the wharf.

At daybreak the steamer Deering Castle sailed for Calcutta.

George and Edith, comfortably provided with two of the best state-rooms on board, were upon the deck at sunrise watching the receding spires of Hong Kong.

* * * * * * *

Never was there a pleasanter or more prosperous voyage than that of the Deering Castle.

They ran down into the China Sea and thence through the Straits of Malacca after a brief stop at Singapore, and thence across the Bay of Bengal to Madras.

At Madras George and Edith left the steamer, having ascertained that the regular London mail of the Peninsular and Oriental Company would leave next day. There was no use in their going to Calcutta.

What they wanted was to get back to New York with all possible speed.

George took a cab at the wharf and drove straight to the Prince of Wales hotel.

"Now, Edith there's got to be a transformation scene," he whispered, as they entered the office. "You engage a room and I will go out and order a full outfit of ladies attire sent to it. Fix yourself up and slip out by the Ladies' Entrance. I'll have a cab in waiting and we'll go immediately to the home of the Rev. Mr. McNish, the most prominent Episcopal clergyman in the city. When we get through with him it will be Mrs. Lewis I will have to look out for. I guess there'll be no trouble after that."

It was a wise plan and one to which Edith gave ready consent.

But perhaps George would not have felt quite so confident could he have looked behind the newspaper which a certain individual, lounging upon one of the cushioned seats in the hotel office, held before his face.

Over the top of the newspaper a pair of eyes were roaming, eyes which followed George as he went up-stairs to see Edith safe to her room and again when he came down again and hurriedly left the hotel.

Between times the eyes had been inspecting the hotel register, and now they followed their owner into the street and saw George enter a "gharry" and go whirling away.

"Good, George Lewis!" their owner muttered. "There's a big difference between a fast steamer and a slow. You're having everything your own way it seems; but I'll soon spoil your fun. I'll marry the girl and get the money too."

He walked meditatively down Albert street.

Who was the owner of the eyes?

CHAPTER XVI.

BUYING A STEAMER.

The loud ringing of a bell was the next thing of which Old King Brady became conscious after his involuntary drink from the green bottle.

"Hello! So you're coming to your senses," he heard a voice exclaim. "Don't say you ain't, for I know better. I saw you wink your left eye-brow just now."

Old King Brady started up in a good deal of confusion.

The bar with its array of bottles had vanished; so had the man in black—both men in black, in fact—also the ruffian at whose suggestion the drugging had been done.

In brief, the detective found himself in a different place altogether, and from the way in which the narrow bunk where he lay pitched and twisted he came to the conclusion that he was once more out at sea.

"Well, friend Brady, how do you find yourself?" the voice spoke again. "It takes old chaps like you twice as long to throw off the effect of those infernal drugs as it does young fellows like me. Here I am, here by the table. You're looking in the wrong direction, man. Ah, that's the talk."

For Old King Brady's roaming eyes had at last rested upon the figure of a man seated at a cabin table; a man wearing black clothes and with a smooth face, which he remembered to have seen before.

It was his fellow prisoner in the bar-room, one of the two men in black.

"Upon my word!" muttered the detective, "this is a strange state of affairs. I've seen you before this, my friend."

"I fancy so."

"You are the man who has been dodging across one continent and——"

"And who is now dodging along the edge of another. You don't expect me to actually take you across the continent of Asia, do you? Unless we went by the way of Siberia that would be impossible. We'll jog along to India, skip round by Arabia and the Red Sea, thence through the canal to the Mediterranean. We'll call that crossing the second continent—is it a go? What do you say?"

Old King Brady arose, shook himself, and walking to the table, sat down in an unoccupied chair.

"Since we seem to be going, I presume I shall have to call it a go," he said quietly. "Perhaps you will have the goodness to tell me *where* we are going, and *who* you are, not to mention a few other things."

"With all the pleasure in life, my dear Brady. I am your fellow prisoner. You may, if you like, call me Galloway Gunn. Wrecked on that ill-fated steamer, the Shanghai, I was saved by a miracle, and reached Hong Kong on a junk just in time to be too late to scoop in—you know what. Started for the—you know who—and trying to dodge a certain individual who fancies himself the king of detectives, tumbled into the hands of—well, you understand. Brady, they drugged us both and run us aboard this little tub of a fruit steamer, bound I *don't* know where."

"Well, upon my word, this is interesting," said Old King Brady. "You have managed to crowd a good deal of information into that one sentence of yours, my friend. Perhaps you wouldn't object to starting up another? There are several points I'm curious about."

"Not in the least. You and I ought to be friends, Brady."

"Friends! Humph!"

"Don't be sarcastic. You think I'm a murderer perhaps?"

"No."

"But you are sure I'm a thief?"

"Even on that point I doubt."

"One thing certain you know. I'm the man you chased out of Mr. Pinto's office, the fellow who twice got trains when you got left."

"Yes, I am sure of that."

"How about being the man you were chasing when you tumbled off the Shanghae?"

"There I am certain again. You are that man."

"Right. So I am. If your name had been Gunn you couldn't have made a straighter shot. Do you know, Brady, I was just going to jump overboard after you that time, when I saw you fished out. No use then, you know. Lord, how I laughed when I saw them put you aboard the wrong steamer. 'It's all right now,' I says to myself. 'We'll be off in ten minutes, and before Brady can possibly reach Hong Kong I shall——' But no matter about that."

"What?"

"No matter."

"It is a great deal of matter."

"All the same I shan't speak."

"I have no power to make you, but understand me, Mr. Gunn, though you may think differently, I'm no fool."

"Pardon me. You don't know perhaps that you lost the hundred thousand dollars which you drew from the bank of Hong Kong?"

"Yes, I do. I have already examined my pockets. It is gone."

"I knew it."

"That's not all."

"What else?"

"Before I left the Tycoon I had a tussel with the man who robbed and murdered Steers in Chicago. I had *all* the money in my possession when I burst into the den. Now it is all gone."

"Great Scott! talk about not being a fool!" cried Mr. Gunn, and his jaw seemed to drop.

"That time I own to it. I was a fool, an idiot, an ass, but now——"

"What now?"

"Now, Mr. Gunn, I have come to the conclusion that you, like myself, are a detective—that you, like myself, are after the $10,000 reward."

"Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho!" laughed Mr. Gunn. "What a joke! What in the name of sense put that into your head?"

"It's there and firmly fixed. I can see through a brick as well as the next man when there's a hole in it. I have acted hastily and this is the result. Patience, I am not through yet."

"Supposing," said Mr. Gunn, meditatively, "supposing that I was a detective, what would you say to joining our issues and working double?"

Old King Brady shook his head.

"Not with you," he said. "I don't like your methods."

"Mind you, I don't say I am a detective, nor——"

But right here the conversation was interrupted by the opening of a door at the head of the cabin stairs, and the entrance of a sharp-faced, weather-beaten looking individual who came hurrying down.

Before he had reached the cabin Old King Brady had pretty well sized him up.

"A Chinese Frenchman," he decided. "A man who will sell out to the highest bidder every time. I wonder if that money I keep sewed up in my coat is all right?"

He placed his hand upon one of the mysterious pockets of the wonderful blue coat, a satisfied look coming over his face as he did so.

The money was still there intact.

By this time the new-comer was at his side.

"Vell," he said, with a sardonic smile, "so you haf come to life, messieurs? How you like ze Napoleon, eh?"

"You mean this steamer?" asked the detective, quietly.

"Eh, bien! What else? Is she not von leetle beauty? Vait till you see more of her, parbleu!"

He dropped into a chair and began to laugh.

"Are you the captain of this steamer?" asked Old King Brady, coolly.

"Mais oui, monsieur. Also ze half owner. I haf ze right to be proud."

"How came we on board of her? Have you any objection to letting us know?"

"Ah, oui! You know. You came on board vera drunk, you two. Take zese shentlemen to Singapore, your friend do say. Vell, he pay your passage, so vat I do but take you along?"

Mr. Gunn arose and began to pace the floor excitedly.

"This is an outrage!" he exclaimed. "A perfect outrage! It is a crime punishable by international law, and I propose to see that it is punished. We were both drugged."

"One moment," interrupted Old King Brady. "Captain, by the way, may I ask your name?"

"Badeau is my name. Morbleu! but you cannot frighten me. You go not to Singapore, you two. I shall put you on shore at a port where zere ees no international law."

"For which you have been paid."

"It is true. What zen?"

"Who paid you?"

"Now, monsieur!"

"Suppose I make it worth your while to reveal this plot? Suppose you join with me?"

"You—you haf no money."

"Perhaps I have a little—perhaps I can get more."

"Vell?"

"Captain, it's five hundred American dollars down, and as much more when you have earned it, if you will promise me your help."

"Eh bien! I can help you, zhentlemen, but——"

"What?"

"Haf you ze money?"

"See," said the detective, producing a bill of the amount named.

The captain's eyes glittered.

"Vell, I can easy get zat," he said. "My crew are all Chinamen; zey obey me if I tell zem to pitch you overboard, but——"

"Well?"

"I like not murder. Gif me ze money, and you promise not to talk and I am your friend. I can tell you sometings vat you don't know."

"No doubt. Under conditions the money is yours."

"Name ze conditions?"

"Tell me who hired you to carry us off?"

"Non, monsieur. I admit not zat. One ami—vat you call him, friend—he say—vell, vat matter? You can do no harm now. I tell all. You are ze detectives. You hunt his brudder. Ha, ha! Too late, zis ees morning, ten of ze clock. At six of ze clock I saw ze brudder sail on ze mail steamer for Madras."

"Wait!" cried Gunn; "the name of this man and his brother?"

"Ah, pardon! You ask too mooch."

"You can at least answer one question. This brother, he looks like——"

"Vera mooch like you, monsieur."

"Good. I understand. You have earned your money, captain, and here it is."

Captain Badeau pocketed the bill with great satisfaction. He felt that he had done a big thing in thus selling out to both sides.

"Zhentlemen," he said, "the Napoleon is at your command. I wish you a pleasant voyage to Singapore."

He arose and would have left the cabin, but Old King Brady stopped him.

"Captain," he said, "you are a Catholic, no doubt?"

"Monsieur! Vat has zat to do with zis leetle peezness?"

"Answer me, please."

"Mais oui, monsieur!"

"Swear by the Holy Virgin that what you have told me is true, and I'll pay you well to take me to Madras."

"I swear by ze Virgin, monsieur, but I cannot go to Madras."

"Why?"

"Ah, vell, ze Napoleon ees empty. I haf to get ze cargo at Singapore."

"Could you make Singapore before that steamer?"

The captain shrugged his shoulders.

"Ze Napoleon is vera fast," he said, "but I could not do zat. I could overtake her by ze time she reach Madras."

"What will you charge to push right on to Madras and not stop at Singapore?"

"Do you mean it?"

"Yes."

The captain reflected.

"Three thousand dollars," he said at length.

"Do you want me to buy your interest in this old tub?"

"Tub, monsieur! tub! You call ze Napoleon a tub! Ah, ciel! Vat sacrilege. She is little, but no faster craft ever sailed ze China seas."

"Suppose I give you three thousand dollars, that will pay for your interest and secure your services?"

"Oui, monsieur."

"Who owns the rest?"

"My brother."

"Where is your brother?"

"Ah, ciel! He is dead, monsieur."

"Then you actually own the steamer?"

"Vell, if you like to call it so."

"Very good," said Old King Brady quietly. "It's nothing short of a purchase, but I'm willing, for your face tells me that you spoke the truth when you said that man had gone to Madras. Captain Badeau, I'll buy you out. Crowd the Napoleon for all she's worth and take us to Madras."

"Was there ever such nonsense! The man simply lies!" exclaimed Mr. Gunn with a contemptuous sneer.

Which was right? Old King Brady, or the mysterious individual calling himself Galloway Gunn?

CHAPTER XVII.

CAPTURED BY THE ENEMY.

WHOLLY unconscious of being observed, George Lewis hurriedly left the Prince of Wales Hotel and proceeded to interview the shopkeepers of Madras.

Now we here in America have but little idea of the size of these Indian cities.

Calcutta and Bombay are as big as Baltimore or Boston, and to all intents quite European in their appearance and customs. With Madras it is just the same.

George was amazed at the well-paved streets and handsome buildings. There was no more difficulty in buying what he wanted here than there would have been in London or New York.

It was evening now, and the lights began to twinkle in the shop windows. George entered a large dry goods establishment, finding it difficult to realize as soon as he had crossed the threshold that he was not in some store on Sixth avenue or Broadway.

Ladies' outfit—why, certainly.

The polite clerks were all attention; the purchases were soon made and on the way to the hotel.

George left the shop and proceeded to the principal business street of the city.

His errand here was an important one. He had resolved to cable back to New York to Mr. John Pinto all the money recovered, except just enough to pay the expenses of Edith and himself on their homeward trip.

But he had no sooner reached the telegraph office than he found himself unable to do this.

The hour was too late. For that sort of business the office was already closed.

"You'll have to come in the morning, sir," said the polite clerk. "At nine o'clock we will be open."

Much chagrined, George left the place and hurried toward the hotel.

He never stopped to look behind him, so great was his haste to get back to Edith. If he had done so, he might have seen a person following his footsteps on the opposite side of the street.

It was the everlasting man in black, not changed a bit since the night of his attack on Old King Brady in the alleys of Hong Kong.

All unconscious of the danger which menaced him, George made the best of his way back to the Prince of Wales Hotel, and proceeding upstairs, knocked at the door of the room to which Edith had been assigned.

What a transformation met his eyes as he entered.

It was the real Edith once more who stood before him.

"Don't I look fine, George?" she exclaimed. "You can't imagine how happy I feel. I was in deadly terror every moment that people would discover my secret from the time we left Hong Kong."

"Certainly you look better, but I don't like that black dress, dear. To be married in mourning brings bad luck, they say."

"But how can we help it? I can't forget poor papa. Oh, George, I feel ——"

"What? What is it, dearest?"

"I wish you hadn't said that. I was trying my best to keep my spirits up and now you've sent them down into the depths."

"Nonsense! There is nothing to fear, Edith. I ought not to have said it—don't know why I did. I've got the stolen money and in a few moments I'm going to have you. I'm sure I'm satisfied to take you in any dress."

"Why, I thought you were going to telegraph the money home?" exclaimed Edith, for it had been all arranged.

"I was too late. We shall have to attend to that to-morrow morning. But there is no use in our delaying any longer, dear. I will go down-stairs and engage the cab. In ten minutes you be at the ladies' entrance and you will find me there."

It was quite dark at the ladies' entrance of the Prince of Wales Hotel that night; for some reason the usual gas lamp had not been lighted—or had they been purposely put out?

Standing in the doorway was an ill-looking fellow whose dress indicated one of the servants of the hotel.

Now Edith had scarcely counted upon meeting any one, and would have hurried past without even looking at the fellow in her anxiety to escape observation had he not planted himself squarely in her path.

"Beg pardon, miss, but are you the lady who was to meet the gentleman in the cab?"

"Yes. Let me pass, please," replied Edith. There was something so repulsive about the fellow that she could scarcely look him in the face.

"Certainly, miss—this way. Cab's all ready!" He flung open the door and obsequiously led the way across the sidewalk to a waiting cab.

It seemed all right. Never imagining anything to the contrary, Edith followed him.

Scarce had she reached the cab door when the man suddenly turned upon her.

Winding one arm about her waist, with the other hand he thrust a handkerchief into the poor girl's mouth before she could do more than to give utterance to one low, gurgling cry.

The next Edith knew she was dragged into the vehicle by two powerful fellows, Hindoos with white turbans and hideous black faces.

"George! Oh, George! Help!" she managed to cry, for the handkerchief had slipped from her mouth.

The tallest of the two Hindus silenced her in a second. Winding his naked, sinewy arm about her throat he drew her down against his shoulder, pressing a chloroform saturated handkerchief to her face.

No more struggling now.

With closed eyes and face as white as death itself, Edith Pinto lay there motionless, as the cab rolled away.

Two minutes later, George, never dreaming of the calamity which had befallen Edith, came dashing up in a cab which he had engaged at a stand some squares away, for in Madras vehicles to hire are not allowed to remain in front of hotels.

"Strange, Edith is not there," he muttered, looking out. "I am a little behind time too."

He alighted from the cab and stood for a moment in anxious expectancy, but no Edith appeared.

"Pardon, Sahib! 'Ees dees Meester Lewis?" asked a native Hindu, dressed after the usual manner of servants in Madras, approaching George with a low bow.

George eyed him suspiciously.

"Yes; what do you want?" he presently replied.

Silently the Hindu handed him a note and withdrew.

George was puzzled.

To the best of his knowledge he had not a solitary acquaintance at Madras, so who could have written it? He was more puzzled still when he came to read by the light inside the door of the ladies' entrance the following lines, badly written with a lead pencil upon a carefully-folded letter sheet:

"DEAREST GEORGE.—It ain't right. With father dead so short a time, I must not marry you now. I have gone to the house of an old friend of my mother's. I knew her to be in Madras, but I did not tell you, for I had made up my mind to this step many days ago. Do not seek to find me. It will be useless. Go home, and give uncle the money. You will find me there, or I shall follow you soon. Then we may consummate our happiness, but not now. EDITH."

George was as pale as a ghost when he finished reading this precious epistle.

"Edith never wrote that. There is some vile plot here," he muttered, and dashed up the stairs to the room.

Of course he did not find Edith.

That she had left was evident. Nothing belonging to her remained in the room.

Down the stairs George flew like a madman, and in a moment was in the street.

"Who gave you that letter?" he demanded of the Hindu messenger, for there was the fellow leaning calmly against the wall with his arms folded, just as though he had expected some such move as this.

"It was given me by a lady, sahib."

"Where? When?"

"The lady was in a cab, sahib," answered the man in broken English. "There was a gentleman

with her. I heard him tell the driver to take them to the Royal Hotel."

"The Royal Hotel! Why, that's close by—just around on the next street. Can you describe the gentleman?"

"No, sahib, I can only say he was a tall man. His clothes were black and very old. I think I can help you though."

"How? Speak quick. I will reward you well."

"Why not go through the alley here to the next street. It will bring you right out by the Royal. Perhaps before your lady even, since the cab has to go around the square."

It was a splendid suggestion, George was amazed that he had not thought of it himself.

It made no difference that the alley was totally dark, save from the light penetrating at either end. He flung a gold piece to the Hindu and dashed into it, for the entrance was not ten feet away.

The Hindu tossed the coin into the air, caught it as it came down, and gave a low whistle.

Meanwhile George hurried on with his eyes fixed on the street beyond.

Strange he never thought of the large sum of money which he carried about him.

Stranger still that the memory of a former adventure in the alleys of Chicago never occurred to his mind.

He thought of both, though, when two men suddenly sprang out of the shadows before he had got half way through the dark passage.

"That's the fellow!" cried one. "Settle him!"

It was the man in black again.

His companion, a Hindu, with a face fairly fiendish in expression, sprang upon George and seized him by the throat with one powerful hand, while in the other a long, glittering knife was raised.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MR. GUNN GOES IN FOR THE REWARD.

"WELL, Brady, I suppose we part here; there's no use in our keeping together any longer. I presume you have given up all idea of arresting me, now."

It was Mr. Galloway Gunn who spoke. The Napoleon had reached Madras some hours behind the regular steamer, and fully twenty-four hours later than the fast opposition boat which she had undertaken to beat, and its passengers were about to land.

"No, I shall not arrest you, although I started round the world with no other idea in my mind," replied the detective, quietly. "I know you haven't got the money, and never had it, for I know you are not the man from whom I took it on the Tycoon; but who the mischief you really are, I don't know, and I don't know that I very much care."

"Tal tal Be civil, Brady. We're getting to be quite old friends, you know."

"No, I mean what I say. Who are you? Why do you take such an intense interest in this matter? Although I don't know you I say you are a detective. Of that much I am sure."

It was evening. Old King Brady and Mr. Gunn having just left the steamer were strolling up one of the principal streets of Madras—the street which, if they followed it far enough, was bound to bring them to the Prince of Wales Hotel.

Well aware that they had reached their destination too late to accomplish their purpose, the old detective and Mr. Gunn were quietly smoking and conversing in a more friendly spirit than their words seemed to indicate.

For many days they had been constant companions, and had adopted toward each other what might be termed a sort of armed neutrality. If they could not agree at least they would not quarrel—that was understood.

"I never said I was not a detective, Brady. It would have made no difference in your belief."

"No, but you would not admit that you are one."

"Admissions are dangerous. You and I understand. I got started on this thing by mere accident. I'll tell you that much now that we are about to part. I went into Mr. Pontus Pinto's office to sell a book. I heard him accusing that young fellow, George Lewis, of robbing him. I knew Lewis was innocent, and I hid behind the screen to see what the outcome of the business would be. Great Scott! I never thought Pinto would drop dead! I saw him. I saw Steers rob the safe too. What could I do but take a hand in?"

"You saw all this and didn't try to prevent it?" exclaimed Old King Brady, amazed. "If you speak the truth what am I to think?"

"Did try to prevent it. Steers walloped me in the hall. I don't like to own that I'm licked but I was then."

"But you were in the office when I entered."

"Came back, my dear fellow, to see how you'd handle yourself. I'd often heard of you and was curious to know."

"Humph. And when you heard John Pinto offer the reward you determined to put the other hand in. I see, it is useless to attempt to disguise the truth. You are a detective, Mr. Gunn."

"I was sure Steers would start West," said Mr. Gunn, meditatively, ignoring entirely Old King Brady's remark. "You see I've been watching him. I'd have had him dead, if like a fool I hadn't allowed him to inveigle me on to the rear platform of the train. I'd no idea he was such a desperate old scoundrel until I found myself flying through the air."

"What are your plans now?" asked Old King Brady.

"Can't say. What are yours?"

"I have not determined. I shall work here till I see there is no use working any longer."

"And the Napoleon?"

"The Napoleon is all right. Captain Badeau and I are excellent friends. I've made him give me a bill of sale for his interest in the steamer, and have got his promise to go with me wherever I wish. He's not such a bad fellow. He'd rather do right than wrong, provided they are made equally profitable."

"He's an infernal scoundrel!" exclaimed Gunn. "And if it wasn't for the time it would take I'd prosecute him. Coming here was all nonsense anyhow. We have no proof that the man in black, as you like to call him, was on board that other steamer. It's my opinion that we are off the trail altogether."

"Still we are here and might as well make the best of it."

"Of course. But it's costing you a pile."

"Mr. Gunn!"

"What is it?"

"You know the name of that man?"

"I own that I do, Brady."

"Better tell me."

"Never! I would die first."

There were tears in Mr. Gunn's eyes as he spoke.

What did it mean?

"I declare, my friend, I can't understand you at all," said Old King Brady. "What are you crying about?"

"Sometimes I feel as though I couldn't understand myself. The fact is—— Hark! what was that?"

A sharp cry had reached their ears, coming out of a narrow alley on their left.

"Gunn, there's some one in trouble in there!" breathed Old King Brady.

"You are right."

"We must help them."

"Of course."

They had not paused while speaking, but had dashed into the alley with one accord.

It was strange—very strange how everything seemed to duplicate itself in this singular case.

Now the scene in the Chicago alley came back to the detective with overwhelming force, for there, just ahead of him, was a young man struggling in the grasp of two natives, and there also was the object of his thoughts—the man in black.

It was George, of course.

As the knife was raised to strike the fatal blow the sound of the approaching footsteps of the detective was heard in the alley.

The knife descended, taking our hero on the left shoulder. A sudden and fortunate twist of his body had saved him from death, but not from an ugly wound.

A sharp, excruciating pain darted through him, and George sank unconscious to the ground.

"My God! This is murder!" cried Old King Brady, as he and Mr. Gunn went dashing forward.

Brief as was the time allowed him, the man in black managed to get in his work.

"Stop! Stop, Jim!" roared Gunn. "For God's sake reflect what you are doing!"

He dashed ahead of Old King Brady, following the flying criminal through the alley.

The two Hindus had sprang away as soon as the deed was done, and were already out of sight.

Surely fate was against Old King Brady.

Scarcely surprised to find that Mr. Gunn was acquainted with the man in black, he rushed after him, but before he had taken twenty steps, stumbled over some obstruction unseen in the darkness and fell sprawling.

It was all over when he rose to his feet. Not a soul was to be seen, save George Lewis, groaning, upon the ground.

Old King Brady, ever humane, turned his attention to the sufferer first, recognizing him immediately.

"Mr. Brady! Can it indeed be you?" groaned George.

"It's no one else. What does all this mean?"

"It means that I got that money, and have lost it again. Oh, Mr. Brady, help me! Edith—her life is in danger. Get a cab, quick. Drive to the steamer Indian Empress. He has taken Edith on board, drugged and helpless. The steamer sails in twenty minutes. Edith must be saved!"

As he leaned over George and took the leather wallet from its concealment the man in black had poured this interesting information into our hero's ear.

"Faster! Faster!" called Old King Brady, leaning forward and calling to the driver of the hansom, which went rattling through the streets of Madras toward the Peninsular and Oriental Co.'s wharf.

"I go as fast as the horse will take us, sahib," replied the dusky driver. "It is no use. We cannot catch the steamer. In one minute she will sail."

"I'm afraid he's right," said George, who was leaning back against the cushions, pale and despairing.

And yet they had lost no time.

Assured by the detective that his wound was not a serious one, George had for the moment gained courage.

A cab was found and Old King Brady helped him into it. As they rode George told all that had occurred since he parted company with the detective on board the Shanghae.

Old King Brady listened in silence.

"Of all the desperate scoundrels I ever chased, this man is certainly the worst," he said. "You have seen his face, and tell me, what is his name?"

"Why, he's Jim Jones, my cousin. I never thought he had brains enough to go in when it rained."

"One can never judge a man by his appearance. Another thing; this fellow Gunn. You say you do not know him, and yet he seems to know your cousin. He called him by his first name."

A sudden light came over the young man's face.

"It's all coming back to me now," he exclaimed. "How could I be so stupid? The resemblance between them might so have told me. He must be Harry Jones, Jim's elder brother, who ran away to sea years ago."

This was just as Old King Brady, growing impatient, called to the driver.

Now they went rattling on, and in a moment had reached the wharf.

Too late!

The huge steamer was just casting off her lines.

"Hold on there! We must catch that steamer!" shouted Old King Brady, leaping out and almost dragging George after him.

"Too late! Don't try it!" cried a uniformed official, throwing himself in front of Old King Brady, who had his eye on one of the open gangways of the now moving craft.

The words were scarcely uttered when a man, all breathless and without a hat, came dashing past them, and with one wild leap, made for the gangway.

It was Mr. Gunn!

He gained a footing, and by the aid of two sailors, who sprang to help him, was dragged on board.

"By-bye, Brady!" he shouted, for it was quite impossible for the detective to follow now. "I've got the best of you again. I'll see you later, after I've claimed that ten thousand dollars reward!"

CHAPTER XIX.

LIVERPOOL.

"BACK again, Mr. Brady! I declare, I began to think you would never come."

"Yes, back again, George," answered Old King Brady, shutting the door and flinging himself into a chair. "I've been working like a major all day, but I've earned my reward."

"You don't mean it?"

"I do though. Your precious cousin, Mr. James Gustavus Jones, is at this very moment in Liverpool, and Edith Pinto is with him. They are staying at a private house in Cadbury street; their passages are engaged on the Celtic, which sails for New York to-morrow, under the names Mr. and Mrs. Clements. They arrived here just forty-eight hours ahead of us, and that was only on account of our break-down at Weissenburg, but for that we would have overtaken them at Amsterdam. Now don't you think I've done pretty well?"

"I should say you had. But, Mr. Brady, it must not rest here. Something must be done. Think of Edith. The police ——"

"Softly, softly. The police of this city have rendered me every assistance in their power. It is by the advice of the chief that I have determined to act alone. If they take a hand in, the courts will detain us all. If Jones can be quietly arrested by me and frightened into going on board the steamer we can all go straight to New York without any delay."

In Old King Brady's chase around the world another step has been taken.

A long step it is, too, from Madras to Liverpool. The third continent has been crossed.

And what were the circumstances which have brought about this sudden shifting of scenes? How is it that in spite of the fact that Old King Brady missed the steamer Indian Empress he is now in Liverpool only a few hours behind his man?

It is simply because Mr. J. Gustavus Jones lied when he said that he intended to take the Indian Empress.

Before noon the next day Old King Brady, who kept steadily at work, learned that a man answering the description of George Lewis' precious cousin had sailed by the Steamer Emir for Constantinople, having with him a young lady said to be somewhat out of her mind.

Here was an interesting discovery! Learned too late, it made the detective fairly furious.

The only satisfaction he had was in the thought that Gunn, after all his efforts, had been as badly left as himself.

What to do was now the question. George and Old King Brady consulted. Our hero was in better condition than might have been expected, his wound proving but a slight affair, and the upshot of the matter was that the further services of Captain Badeau were enlisted and the Napoleon started for Constantinople that very night, hoping to overhaul the Emir at the Suez canal.

No use though.

They arrived at Constantinople just in time to be too late.

The Emir had discharged her passengers a day previous.

Jones and Edith were readily identified, and it was ascertained that they had gone on to Vienna by rail.

From Vienna to Berlin, from Berlin to Amsterdam Old King Brady chased them, always close behind, never catching up.

At Weissenburg, Germany, a railroad accident delayed them, which afforded the fugitives just time to catch the Liverpool steamer—an irregular boat, leaving the detective no option but to take the regular line to London himself.

Upon reaching London, George and Old King Brady hurried on to Liverpool, and once more the latter brought his skill and experience to bear on the case.

The result we have just stated above.

"How could he have forced Edith to remain with him?" sighed George. "It would seem as though at some of the places they stopped at she might have appealed for help and got it."

"What! Do you then doubt her, my boy?" exclaimed the detective.

They had left the hotel at which they were stopping, and were now walking down Jermyn street. The clock had just struck nine.

"No, no! Never. Still ——"

"Still you do just a little; but I am satisfied that you are wrong. At every stopping place where we have made inquiries about them, people have spoken of Miss Pinto as insane."

"Pshaw! That's only one of his lies."

"I don't know," said the detective shaking his head. "It might be true. The girl has had enough trouble happen to her in the last three months to drive her crazy. Why our trip around the world has been almost as rapid as that famous Mr. Fogg who did it in 80 days. We haven't been much over that so far; a hundred would bring us to New York."

"Shall we ever get back!" sighed George. "It seems an age since that dreadful day when Mr. Pinto accused me of robbing him in the old office in Wall Street."

"It does seem a long time. Of course your precious cousin put him up to that. No doubt he hired Steers to drug you into the defalcation. You are gradually learning that I am right. It was a plot. That man is not by any means such a fool as he looks."

"Have you heard anything of Gunn to-day?" inquired George, as they continued to hurry on.

"Not a thing. Since the moment we saw him leap aboard the Indian Empress, I have had no clew to his movements. Let him go. If he is really Jones' brother, as you suspect, he is probably quite as big a rascal as Jones. It was a bad break he made when he gave that jump. No matter. Here we are at Cadbury street; now to find the house."

"What number is it?"

"193, I think; let me look at my memorandum. Yes, 193."

"And this is only 60," mused George, looking up at the nearest house. "It's further down. I don't like this neighborhood, Mr. Brady, not for a cent."

Certainly it was not a very attractive locality.

Situated on the outskirts of Liverpool, Cadbury street presented a confused, not to say chaotic, appearance. It was a region of houses begun but never finished, of sunken lots where stagnant water gathered, a place meant to be fashionable, and which possibly might become so somewhere about the year 2001.

"Well, I'm not particularly enthusiastic about it myself," replied Old King Brady. "I wonder what could have brought him to such a place."

"It's hard telling. I've seen so little of my cousin for the last ten years that I feel as though I scarcely knew him. Say, Mr. Brady, we ain't the only ones out here to-night. Don't you notice that tall fellow on ahead there?"

"I've been watching him," replied the detective. "He seems to be looking for some particular number, too."

It was no easy matter to watch any one that night, for it was dark as pitch, and now the rain was beginning to fall in an uncertain, drizzling fashion which didn't make Cadbury street look any pleasanter.

The man who attracted George's attention had come suddenly around the corner of the street ahead of them, and was looking from one straggling house to another in an uncertain sort of way.

In a moment he made a dive into an area and was not seen again.

"What if it should be Jim Jones! It didn't look unlike him," suggested George.

"I was thinking of that," answered the detective. "Let us hurry on. Thunder!" he exclaimed, after a few steps were taken. "The house he went into is the very one we want."

It was meant for a very fine affair, that house, but it was anything but that in actual fact.

It stood alone between two others. Odd expression, but true in a sense, for the others were houses in embryo. The builder had progressed as far as the cellar beams and there quit.

There were no steps; the front door consisted of rough boards nailed together, and fastened by a padlock. A ladder led up to this entrance; but there was another—the area door into which the man had disappeared. Over this lower door was the number 193, and a light burned dimly behind curtained windows above.

"This is a sweet sort of place," muttered Old King Brady, after knocking twice and receiving no answer.

"What are you going to do?" asked George.

"I hardly know. The information I received was positive, though. A young man hired rooms here who answers to your cousin's description in every way. There was a girl with him who was described as very beautiful, but quite insane."

"Edith! Oh, I know it's Edith! Mr. Brady, I'm going in here if——"

"Patience. So am I; but let us be sensible. First to get the lay of the land, and—— Ha! what was that?"

A deaf man might have heard it.

It was a wild, maniacal cry twice repeated, apparently ringing out from the upper part of the house.

"That's Edith's voice!" cried George, seizing the door knob. Nothing could stop him now.

"Upon my word, this is going to be serious," muttered Old King Brady. "Door won't open, eh—hold on—I'll fix it. There she goes!"

Old King Brady's shoulder had forced doors before—it forced this one with a rush.

"Hold on! Don't be rash!" whispered the detective. "Remember, George Lewis, that cousin of yours is a desperate man."

"Desperate! It's my belief he's mad!" answered George. "Don't try to hold me back, Mr. Brady."

"Only for your own good. Get behind me—there, so. Nothing will be gained by haste or rashness. Now we'll go up-stairs."

The lower part of the house was unfinished and deserted. But for the light above the detective would have found it hard to make himself believe that any one would be concealed there.

They pushed on upstairs with as little noise as possible.

The parlor floor was just the same.

Old King Brady began to wonder if he could have been misinformed.

"We'll try the next floor, though," he whispered. "That's where the light is; that cry might have come from one of the houses across the street."

"No, it didn't, Brady; it came from right here!" spoke a voice out of the darkness. "I'll trouble you to take a tumble and leave this job to me. I don't propose, after all my trouble, to divide that reward!"

The voice was that of Mr. Galloway Gunn, and there before them at the foot of the stairs stood the man of mystery as large as life, with a cocked revolver in each hand.

CHAPTER XX.

THE MAN FROM AFRICA.

"Mr. Gunn! Of all the men in the world you are the last I expected to see here."

The speaker was Old King Brady, lost in surprise, but apparently not frightened in the least.

"Can't say as much for you, my dear fellow," whispered Gunn in his most affable manner. "I've not been following you about all day for nothing. I knew you'd be here. George Lewis, how are you? Haven't seen you in several cycles—not since the night the old Shaughae went down."

But George was too much excited to speak. Believing Gunn to be in league with Mr. James Gustavus Jones, murderer, thief and general scoundrel, he expected nothing else but to feel the whole top of his head go flying up to the top of the unfinished house.

Mr. Gunn, however, did not show any disposition to shoot.

"Lower those revolvers, if you please, sir," said Old King Brady calmly. "We are in a civilized community now—there need be no shooting here."

Gunn laughed.

"With all the pleasure in life, my dear Brady," he said. "I haven't the least intention of shooting you. Force of habit, I assure you—only wanted to show you that I was prepared in case you attempted any funny business yourself."

He lowered the revolvers, but still kept them ready in his hand.

"Is it war or peace, Brady? Which?"

"Mr. Gunn, I have no bargain to make with you or any one else. I am here for a purpose—doubtless you know that purpose. Stand aside, and let me go up-stairs."

"One moment, Brady. I am just as determined a fellow as you are. This is my case. I was first on the ground. The reward belongs to me, but you may have it, providing——"

"Ah, I was right, then. You are a detective?" interrupted Old King Brady.

"I am."

"I thought as much."

"See my shield," whispered Gunn, throwing back the left lapel of his coat. "I am chief of the detective bureau of Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. I was in New York on leave of absence to attend to some private business when this thing came up. Happened to drop into Pinkerton's—in came old Pinto, asking for a detective to go to his place—said he had been robbed by a young man named George Lewis. You may guess my surprise when I heard the name, for George Lewis happens to be——"

"Your own cousin!" exclaimed our hero. "I know you now. You are Jim Jones' brother Harry, who went out to Africa when I was a little boy."

"Right, my boy. I knew you from the first. I hadn't looked into that matter far before I saw you were innocent, and come to the conclusion that my poor brother, who always had a vicious nature was the guilty man. He plotted with Steers to ruin you. He tempted Steers to commit the robbery, and had arranged to meet him and divide. Steers gave him the slip, but Jim caught him in the Chicago alley, and——. You know the rest. I reached Chicago too late to prevent it, owing to my little accident on the train."

"Is all this true?" exclaimed Old King Brady, not a little amazed.

"As true as gospel. I was the book agent who entered Mr. Pinto's office on the afternoon he fell dead. I am the man you followed, Brady. I have made mistakes and so have you. I could have prevented the robbery, but I thought to let Steers have rope enough to hang him. He proved too much for me. I blundered about the steamers in San Francisco. I blundered in believing that I could influence my two brothers in that den in Hong Kong, and I blundered again in following Jim at Madras. He threw a bait in my way, and made me believe he had taken the steamer Indian Empress. I swallowed it—the bait, not the steamer—and thought my chances were all gone until I happened to strike you in Liverpool. I've been shadowing you ever since."

"And did your brothers recognize you in Hong Kong—does your brother Jim know you are still on his trail?"

"Yes to the first, and no to the second question, Brady. Let me state my position in a few words. I don't care a fig about the reward now, but I do propose to save my brother if I can."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Old King Brady. "If your brother is in this house he is my game."

"Not impossible. He shall return the money. As for the murder no one can prove it. What I say is only surmise. I shall deny that I ever said it, if the case comes into court. I shall save Jim at any cost."

"Then you are not a true detective. Your first duty is to your profession."

"I don't care. Brady, let me advise you as a friend to leave this to me. You shall have the money if he still has got it, but leave me to deal with Jim."

"Never! I believe your brother to be in the house. I intend to carry this thing out my own way without interference from any one. Stand aside, sir. You will find that you cannot intimidate me. It is my belief that you are almost as big a scoundrel as your brother, and——"

"Help! Murder! Help!" came the cry again, ringing down the stairs.

"That's Edith!" exclaimed George, leaping forward.

Nor was Old King Brady less prompt.

With a sudden dart he sprang upon the man from Africa, and pinning him against the wall wrenched the revolver away.

"I'll fix you first!" he cried, "and then——"

But Old King Brady did not finish the sentence, for at the same instant a wild yell was heard, and down the stairs the body of a man came rolling, striking the detective with such violence as to throw him from his feet.

CHAPTER XXI.

NEARING THE END.

"You had better try and eat a bite, dearie. It'll keep your strength up like you know."

"No, no. I cannot eat. The food would choke me. I only want to die."

"But you must. What will Mr. Jones say when he comes in? Such a nice, kind man, too, and so liberal. It's really a 'orrid shame the way you treat 'im. I only wish't I 'ad a chance to make such a match. I'd do it quicker 'n a wink."

"No, no! I will not—I say I will not. You horrible woman, leave me. If I only knew I was never to see your wicked face again I could die content. Don't you dare to speak to me, Mrs. Bills. God knows it's little time enough I have when my head is clear. I shall never eat another mouthful of your drugged food!"

A shrill snort of defiance burst from the lips of the stout, blear-eyed old creature, who bent over the couch upon which lay Edith Pinto, looking weak and pale.

"'Orrible woman, indeed!" she protested, angrily. "I'll 'ave you to hunderstand, Miss, that I won't 'ave it. Hall the way from Hindia you've been er hinsultin' on me. I'm just as respectable as you or hanyone else. Wasn't my poor 'usband a hossifer in the British harmy? Wasn't he—ont now we'll 'ave a stop put to this, for 'ere he comes."

The door opened and in walked, or rather staggered—for it was plain that he was very much under the influence of liquor—a person who has played rather a prominent part in this story—Mr. J. Gustavus Jones.

It was night, and the scene was one of the upper rooms in the partially finished house in Cadbury street, Liverpool, where Old King Brady and George Lewis so unexpectedly encountered Mr. Gunn.

It was not an inviting place, but the location was a lonely one, and promised to serve the evil purposes of the villain well. It had been chosen by Mrs. Bills, and belonging as it did to a bankrupt relative of that interesting female, there seemed little chance of any interference, no matter what might transpire within its walls.

Never had a more unrighteous plot been at-

tempted than this, which Jones was trying to carry out.

With the money in his possession, and Edith his wife, he felt that not only would he be safe from any interference on the part of her family, but would be safe to have the spending of the remainder of her father's fortune as well.

"What's the matter here?" he demanded thickly, as he pushed the door shut; balancing himself unsteadily he stared about the room.

"She won't eat her supper," answered Mrs. Bills in a deprecating way, "and the dear knows it's a fine one. I prepared it every morsel of it with my own two 'ands."

The man's face grew dark.

"You've let her come to her senses again, that's what's the matter," he roared. "Didn't I warn you, woman, to keep her well dosed? Here we are right at the finishing point, and now you'll spoil all. Our passages for America are engaged, I have found a parson who is willing to marry us whether the bride consents or not. In ten minutes the carriage is to be at the door. Now the drug won't have time to work. I don't want to marry a girl I have got to carry bodily up the parson's steps. There must be no more fooling. She's got to take her dose at once."

It was a dreadful condition of affairs.

All the way from India Edith had been kept in a half-dazed condition through the influence of a powerful opiate, administered by the hand of Mrs. Bills.

By nothing but neglect had she been allowed to come to her senses now.

Jones, staggering to the sofa where she lay, produced a small phial, and would have forced a portion of its contents down her throat had not the unfortunate girl, desperate in spite of the overpowering weakness which repeated dosing had brought upon her, dashed it from his hands, spilling its contents upon the uncarpeted floor.

"Never," she cried, "never, never! Oh, if there was only some one to hear me! Help, help, help!"

Her screams were loud enough to have been heard blocks away.

"You little vixen! You will, will you?" hissed the man, striking her in his rage.

It was a barbarous thing to do. None but a drunken coward would have been guilty of such an act.

"Lors-a-massy, Mr. Jones, would you strike a woman?" cried Mrs. Bills, roused at last to some trace of the finer feelings of her sex. Seizing him around the waist as he was about to repeat the blow, she attempted to drag him away.

"Let go of me—let go, I say!" breathed Jones, with all the fury of a madman.

"Indeed and I won't! If the poor lamb can't be dosed quietly she shan't be dosed at all. Don't you 'it her again, sir, don't——"

But he did.

Wrenching one arm free the scoundrel repeated the blow, which brought its retribution with it, for the woman, who was more than his match in strength, struck him squarely in the face with a force which sent him reeling back to the floor.

"Are you mad?" she cried. "'Pon my word I've thought so for weeks back. Look out! Don't you touch me. Oh, you would, would you? How's that?"

A pistol had been drawn, but Mrs. Bills had him by the throat before he could use it.

Wrenching the weapon away, she flung it into the furthermost corner of the room, at the same time dragging her prisoner toward the door.

"Help! Murder! Help!" screamed poor Edith, almost wild with terror.

She tried to rise, but was too weak to do so. Sinking back upon the sofa she screamed again.

"Stop! Stop!" gasped Jones. "There's some one on the floor below. Stop, for Heaven's sake, woman, or you'll ruin us all!"

"Not if ten hundred million bobbies was in the 'ouse would I stop!" cried Mrs. Bills, still dragging him across the floor. "I'm no saint, the dear knows. I was 'oping to get through with this business to-night, and meant to join a church an' be'ave myself from this hout; but I've 'ad enough of it, and I won't stand no more. A man what would strike a woman I hain't got no use for! Get out of this, you low-lived scamp—get out!"

She was a perfect amazon, was Mrs. Bills, once her anger was aroused.

Jones would have had difficulty in getting the better of her, even if he had been sober, while now he was as a child in her hands.

But before he could utter another word the door was suddenly flung open and a young man sprang in upon them.

"Edith! Edith!"

"Oh, George! Help me! Save me!"

"Out of my way! I deal with him!" shrieked Mrs. Bills more furious than ever now, for Jones in his struggles had managed to strike her.

With all her strength she pushed him through the door before George could fairly grasp the situation.

The next thing Mr. J. Gustavus Jones knew he was rolling down stairs.

CHAPTER XXII.

CONCLUSION.

It was a happy moment for George Lewis—we had almost said the happiest of his life—but that was yet to come.

We refer, of course, to the moment when springing to the sofa he flung his arms around Edith and pressed her to his heart.

"Edith! Edith! At last!" he cried passionately.

But there was no response.

Edith was past that, and what wonder?

She had fainted in his arms.

George laid her gently back upon the sofa, and, running to the table, seized a pitcher of water which stood there, and dashed a portion of its contents into her face.

The effect was what he expected. In a moment the eyes opened and a wan smile flitted over the girl's pallid face.

"Oh, George, if you only knew what I have suffered!" she wailed. "If you only knew!"

"Courage, darling; courage! Your sufferings are over now. Oh, I could kill him! I——"

"Hush! Don't leave me! Where is he—where is Mrs. Bills? Oh, what is going on down-stairs?"

There was noise enough at all events. It sounded as if the whole house was coming down.

"I must go, Edith—don't hold me, dearest. I am needed perhaps."

"No, no! Don't leave me—don't. I shall certainly die if you do," she pleaded, and fully five minutes elapsed before George could tear himself away.

Meanwhile the noise had ceased; the half finished house was silent as a tomb.

George rushed down-stairs, but to his amazement could discover no one. He hurried down to the basement, and found the street door wide open, but when he looked out there was no one in sight.

Had he been a few moments sooner he would have seen Mrs. Bills waddling up Cadbury street with all the speed possible to so ponderous a person, but even this was after the house had grown still, and the woman saw that a chance was offered for her to make her escape.

Wondering what it all meant, George was about to hurry back to Edith's side, when a cab suddenly drove up in front of the door, and stopped.

"Beg pardon, sir, but I was told to call here for a sick lady," said the driver. "You h'aiu't the gent what h'engaged me, though."

"But I engage you now!" exclaimed George.

There was no doubt that the cabby was innocent enough. His face showed that. With his assistance Edith was brought down-stairs and placed in the vehicle.

"My business is to attend to her," thought George, as he was about to enter. "I guess Old King Brady knows enough to take care of himself. Great Scott! What is this?"

Before him stood the object of his thoughts grasping the arm of Mr. J. Gustavus Jones, while right behind were three policemen, and between them the detective from Africa—otherwise Mr. Galloway Gunn.

The whole party seemed to have suddenly appeared upon the scene, while George and the cabby were helping Edith down-stairs.

But there was no mystery about it. Like many other things it was very simple once understood.

Knocked off his feet by the sudden fall of Mr. J. Gustavus Jones, Old King Brady lost no time in picking himself up, and succeeded in doing so only to find himself struggling in the arms of Mr. Gunn.

"Fly, Jim! fly!" cried the man from Africa. "Save yourself. There are half a dozen bobbies watching this place—they are only waiting for this man to give the word."

"Harry! My God, is it you?"

"Fly! Fly!"

It wasn't exactly flying, but Jones managed to get down the basement stairs somehow, for his fall had inflicted little damage beyond a scratch or two.

"Put that in your pipe and smoke it!" cried Gunn with a sudden twist of his leg, trying to throw Old King Brady down.

But, somehow, the leg didn't twist right. Instead of Old King Brady it was Mr. Gunn who went down, and—snap—there was a pair of handcuffs about his wrists.

"Now it's my game!" breathed the detective.

Before the African delegate could utter a word he was dragged down-stairs and out into the open air, and a sharp whistle sounded.

"One of the bobbies!" groaned Gunn. "My poor brother, he is lost! Brady, spare him!"

"Not much question as to who's ahead this time!" cried Old King Brady, as he dragged him to the corner of the next street, where Mr. J. G. J. could be seen struggling in the grasp of two stout policemen.

"Is this the man you want, sir?" demanded one of the officers.

In answer Old King Brady, still grasping Mr. Gunn with the left hand, quickly ran his right into the various pockets of the man who had led him a chase across three continents.

"Yes," he exclaimed, as he pulled out a huge leather wallet well stuffed with bills; "this is the man, and here is his boodle. I've won at last after a chase around the world!"

* * * * * * *

It was rather an abrupt termination of Old King Brady's long chase, perhaps, but we must tell the end as we told the beginning—precisely as it all occurred.

Feeling that help might become necessary at the last moment, the detective had requested the presence of the officers outside the unfinished house in case of need.

They had not failed him.

Turning Gunn over to their care, Old King Brady, after a brief delay, returned to the house, reaching the door just in time to meet George and Edith leaving in the cab, as we have said.

"You have caught him, Mr. Brady—you have got the money?" cried George, in great excitement.

"I have, but you, I see, have got what is better—the girl you love. Take my advice, George Lewis, drive straight to the parson's, and marry her this very night."

And this is precisely what George did.

Before midnight Edith became Mrs. Lewis, and Old King Brady, having disposed of his prisoners, personally gave the bride away.

All was not finished yet, though.

There was extradition papers to be obtained, for Old King Brady was resolved to take his prisoner back to New York.

Prisoner did we say? Was there only one then?

Only one.

Although Old King Brady doubted even up to the last moment, it turned out that Mr. Gunn had told the actual truth.

He was a detective; he did hold the position of chief in the South African city of Pietermaritzburg. In all that he had done he had been actuated by proper motives. The Liverpool authorities knew all about him, and he carried on his person letters of introduction the chief of the Scotland Yard bureau referring to Mr. Harry Jones in the highest terms.

"I only wanted to save my brother, Brady," he said. "You cannot blame me for that."

No, Old King Brady did not blame him.

Finding that he was actually one of the fraternity the detective withdrew all charges against him, while "Mr. Gunn" on the other hand gave up the fight and attempted no opposition to the extradition of his brother to the United States.

It was the steamer Celtic which took them to New York. All but Mr. Gunn—he returned to Africa after bidding his brother a sad farewell, to which in response came only bitter words and wild, incoherent talk.

"That cousin of yours will be a lunatic before we reach New York," said Old King Brady to George one morning on board the steamer.

He was right.

There is little doubt that Mr. J. Gustavus Jones had a screw loose from the start as the saying goes.

They were all loose by the time the Celtic reached her pier, however; and instead of the gallows or a prison cell, the man who had led Old King Brady on his chase over three continents was taken to a lunatic asylum, where he soon died hopelessly insane.

Great was the surprise of Mr. John Pinto when his niece suddenly walked in upon him and introduced herself as George's bride.

He scarcely liked it, but he had to get used to it. The fact that all but a few thousand of the stolen money was brought back served in a great measure to mitigate his wrath.

But why delay the end?

We need only add that Steers, the defaulting book-keeper, lies in a pauper's grave forgotten, while George Lewis, the honest clerk, is proprietor of the Wall street banking office to-day.

The firm is Pinto and Lewis.

It's all one, though, for the partnership will never be dissolved; the firm consists of Edith and George.

As for Old King Brady he pocketed the $10,000 reward and went back to business.

There had not been so very much profit in the case, but there was something left even after all expenses were deducted; and as the detective had seen a portion of the world which he had never expected to visit, he felt that his long chase over three continents had not been in vain.

[THE END.]

DIME NOVEL CLUB
1525 W. 12th St., Brooklyn 4, N.Y.